

FORMULA E Top drama or shambles in Spain?

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for future titles

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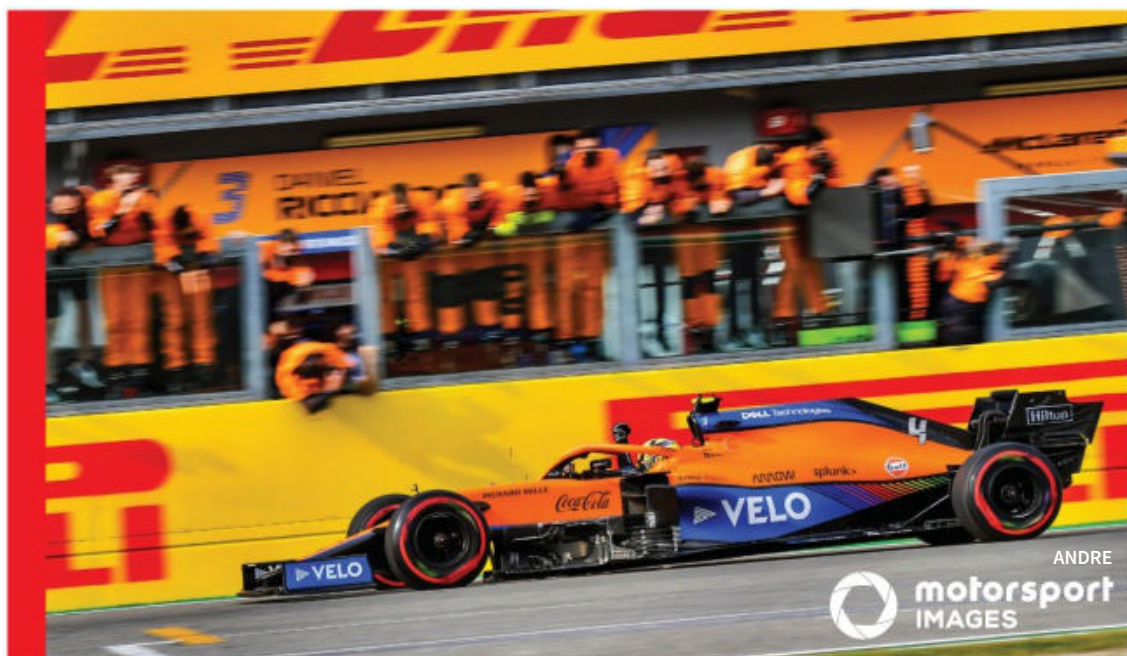


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Don't forget about Norris in the battle of the F1 Brits

Thanks to his Mercedes links and headline-grabbing drive in last year's Sakhir Grand Prix, George Russell is probably the first name that comes to mind when considering who will follow Lewis Hamilton as Britain's next Formula 1 world champion. We wouldn't argue with that, but it would be wrong to overlook Lando Norris in the debate.

Both scored a lot of success on their way up the single-seater ladder, both won what was then the McLaren Autosport BRDC Award, and each have been part of the recovery of one of F1's greatest teams. McLaren is further along that road than Williams and, as our cover article on page 20 shows, the Woking squad's increasing competitiveness has allowed Norris to show what he can do against some of F1's established frontrunners.

Norris has also started this season brilliantly and currently sits third in the drivers' table behind Hamilton and Max Verstappen. His drive at the recent Emilia Romagna GP demonstrated his increasing maturity. New team-mate Daniel Ricciardo will surely improve as he gets used to the McLaren but, if Norris can continue to match or beat the talented Australian, the 21-year-old's stock will rise further.

Last weekend was a dramatic one, and included one of the closest World Rally finishes in history (p36). But the Formula E events in Valencia surely take the biscuit. Turn to p42 to see what Matt Kew (and others) made of the chaotic scenes on Saturday.



Kevin Turner

Kevin Turner
Chief Editor

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6 MAY**

Portuguese GP
Our F1 report from the
Algarve Circuit, plus
BTCC preview



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Those 'noisy' Formula E cars upset the residents of Battersea when they raced in 2015 and 2016



IT'S OFFICIAL: LONDON ROUND

FORMULA E

London will finally make its way back onto the Formula E calendar in 2021, with the ExCeL Centre down to host a double-header event across 24-25 July now that the full schedule for this season has at last been signed off.

The Docklands venue agreed a five-year deal with the championship back in March 2019, but the pandemic forced races to be cancelled last year as the site was repurposed into the Nightingale Hospital to combat the waves of COVID-19.

The exhibition centre and its 1.5-mile circuit marks the return of a British round after Battersea Park played host to the season finales in 2015 and 2016. But the leafy venue was binned off thereafter chiefly due to noise complaints from local residents, although no one wrote in to the *Daily Mail* to scupper Formula E's quiet credentials when Lucas di Grassi was sent around the track in the very small hours to prove a point.

Whether fan attendance will be permitted currently comes without a guarantee. While 8000 spectators were allowed into Wembley to watch Manchester City beat Tottenham Hotspur to the League Cup last weekend, the 20-turn ExCeL lap features a novel indoor section, so plans are afoot to maximise outside viewing capacity.

An original draft of the calendar was issued by the FIA last summer and listed the entire running order. But this was then retracted in favour of announcing dates in batches as the Chilean, Mexican and Chinese rounds were all postponed.

Now that the remainder of the fixture list for 2021 has been made public, it fulfils chief championship

officer Alberto Longo's long-held ambition to navigate the disruption of the past 13 months by staging a record-breaking 15 races. Lesser-known Mexican venue Autodromo Miguel E Abed, with promoter Jose Abed high up at the FIA, will make its debut across 19-20 June while the usual Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez F1 site remains in use as a temporary COVID hospital.

Based near the city of Puebla, the Abed circuit hosted the World Touring Car Championship between 2005 and 2009 and is configurable, with a Rockingham-style 1.25-mile oval flanking a technical inner loop. Logistics will prove a headache, with limited hotels nearby to house teams and an internal heads-up sent out concerning safety in the region.

Then there's a return to the Red Hook area of New York across 10-11 July and, after a hop over to London, the season will conclude with two races at the Tempelhof Airport site in Berlin, which hosted the six-race conclusion to the 2019-20 campaign after it was paused for five months.

Longo said: "It's a massive achievement by all to release the full calendar for this season. The calendar includes the most races we've held in one season and shows our continued commitment to create a momentum-building schedule that fans and audiences across the world will follow. Four double-header events in Puebla, New York City, London and Berlin are going to set the scene perfectly to crown Formula E's first official FIA World Champion."

This final calendar update now confirms the cancellation of the Marrakech E-Prix on 22 May, as reported by Autosport last month, with lockdown



➔ P42 FORMULA E CHAOS

IS ON IN JULY

restrictions set to tighten around Ramadan. This comes after the recent Rome and Valencia events were boosted to become double-headers ahead of the one-shot Monaco race on the full grand prix circuit on 8 May.

The 5-6 June visit to Santiago has also fallen off the calendar, with Chile remaining on the UK government 'red list' travel ban, meaning returning team and championship crew would have needed to quarantine in a government-approved hotel for 10 days upon their return.

Formula E has also pledged to reorganise a Seoul E-Prix, a maiden event in South Korea, for the following 2021-22 season, the last year of the Gen2 car. Santiago and Sanya will return to the calendar next year too with a commitment to have fans in attendance.

MATT KEW

REMAINING 2021 DATES		
RD	VENUE	DATE
7	Monte Carlo MCO	8 May
8	Puebla MEX	19 June
9	Puebla MEX	20 June
10	New York USA	10 July
11	New York USA	11 July
12	London GBR	24 July
13	London GBR	25 July
14	Berlin DEU	14 August
15	Berlin DEU	15 August



BATHIE/MOTORSPORTIMAGES

PIT + PADDOCK



FIA releases blueprint for new electric GT series

ELECTRIC GT

Fast-charging during pitstops, scope for battery development and multiple drivetrain concepts are all part of a new electric GT category introduced by the FIA. "Groundbreaking" was the term used by the governing body last week on the release of the technical blueprint.

The new category allows technical freedoms so far unseen in EV motorsport. Its regulations have been devised "to serve the manufacturers as a platform to develop road-relevant technology", according to Leena Gade, president of the FIA's GT Commission.

"Manufacturers, especially premium brands specialised in high-performance road cars, want to build cars relevant to their DNA and design philosophy rather than rely on standardised components," she explained. "Many simply wouldn't be interested in a spec or semi-spec formula."

Pitstop races, likely to be in the region of 45 minutes, with fast-charging are central to the vision for the new category. The technology will allow the cars to recharge their batteries to 60% capacity inside a "few minutes", according to the FIA. The idea is to allow different strategic options to ensure there is always activity on track.

The new rules are the first for an all-electric category to allow battery development. Manufacturers will be able to build bespoke battery layouts using lithium-ion cells supplied by Saft, a subsidiary of oil company Total that is also supplying the batteries

for the Peugeot Le Mans Hypercar that will debut in next year's World Endurance Championship.

Two or four-wheel-drive machinery will be permitted, as will torque vectoring, the modulation of power to each driven wheel as a performance aid.

Manufacturers will be able to develop a two-door electric sports car to the new regulations or convert an existing GT3 contender to an electric powertrain. Gade explained that incorporating the GT3 platform made "a lot of sense looking from a financial standpoint" because the rules have been written "to strike the right balance between the technical freedom and cost control".

A maximum power output of 575bhp (430kW) and a minimum weight range of 1490-1530kg should put the new breed of electric racers in the same performance range as GT3.

Bentley, which last year announced that its motorsport future lies in the EV realm, expressed interest in the new class and revealed that it has been one of the manufacturers involved in the technical working groups that have framed the regulations.

"We have been involved in it and we have done a bit of concept work," said the British marque's motorsport boss, Paul Williams. "There is interest, but we have made no decisions yet."

The FIA is planning to run its own series and has already appointed a promoter. Its identity, along with a name for the series and a date for its introduction, are set to be announced in May.

GARY WATKINS



COATES/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Russell apologises to Bottas after Imola controversy

FORMULA 1

George Russell has issued an apology to Valtteri Bottas following their crash at the recent Emilia Romagna Grand Prix, cooling tensions between the rivals for a Mercedes 2022 seat.

Williams driver and Mercedes protege Russell and Merc incumbent Bottas crashed while fighting for ninth place at Imola when they collided at high speed on the approach to the Tamburello chicane. Both drivers were quick to point the finger – literally, in Bottas’s case – and place blame, with Russell claiming that Bottas broke a gentlemen’s agreement about late moves approaching the braking zone.

Russell also claimed in his initial media interviews after the crash that Bottas might have defended differently against another driver. He is widely predicted to be a successor to either Bottas or seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton at Mercedes in the near future, perhaps as early as 2022.

Russell’s suggestion was labelled as “bullshit” by Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff, who also said the Briton should have acted differently given he was fighting a Mercedes.

In a message posted to his social media channels last week, Russell backtracked from his initial comments and apologised to both Bottas and the Williams team for the incident.

“Yesterday wasn’t my proudest day,” he said. “I knew it would be one of our best opportunities to score points this season and, when those points matter as much as they do to us right now, sometimes you take risks. It didn’t pay off and I have

to take responsibility for that.

“Having had time to reflect on what happened afterwards, I know I should have handled the whole situation better. Emotions can run high in the heat of the moment and yesterday mine got the better of me. I apologise to Valtteri, to my team and to anyone who felt let down by my actions.

“That’s not who I am and I expect more from myself, as I know others expect more from me. I’ve learned some tough lessons this weekend and will come out of this a better driver and a better person for the experience.

“Now it’s full focus on Portugal and a chance to show what I’m really about. Thanks for all the messages, both positive and negative. They will all help me to grow.”

Hamilton was one of the first drivers to react to Russell’s message, replying: “Strength comes from vulnerability. If you don’t make the mistake, you can never learn the lesson. Respect for taking responsibility. On to the next one.”

Russell said prior to posting his message that he planned to call Bottas for clear-the-air talks, but it is not known if the two have spoken on the phone yet.

The incident may have wider ramifications on Mercedes’ season, with the team understood to have totted up the damage on Bottas’s car to around £1million. Wolff feared that it may cost Mercedes upgrades later in the year. “Our car is almost a write-off and in a cost-cap environment that is certainly not what we needed, and probably it’s going to limit upgrades that we’re able to do,” he said.

LUKE SMITH

Teams agree to F1 sprint races

FORMULA 1

Silverstone is set to host the first Formula 1 sprint race at the British Grand Prix after teams and series bosses finally approved plans on Monday (26 April).

F1 has been engaged in talks with teams in recent months over introducing sprint races to the grand prix weekend at three rounds in 2021. Although teams were largely behind the idea, concerns were raised about the impact of crash damage from the additional race action, prompting F1 to strike a deal worth around \$500,000 per team. This paved the way for the F1 Commission to unanimously approve the plan via e-vote on Monday, with F1 announcing that 100km sprint races would take place at two European events and one flyaway this year.

Although the venues were not named, the British Grand Prix is set to stage the first sprint race, which will run on a Saturday in place of traditional qualifying, before Monza runs the new format for the Italian GP. Interlagos has been targeted as a third option, but it is understood that this is subject to change due to heightened interest from flyaway events.

The grid for the 100km sprint race will be set by traditional qualifying on a Friday afternoon. Drivers will have two sets of tyres to choose from for the sprint race, but are not required to make a pitstop. The top three finishers will be awarded points (3-2-1) for the drivers’ and constructors’ championships.

A one-hour FP2 session will still take place on Saturday morning, but teams will be restricted on what changes they can make to their cars under parc ferme from the start of qualifying on Friday, preventing them from building special qualifying cars.

LUKE SMITH



COATES/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



WEC LMP2 machinery had the measure of the new Toyota GR010 HYBRID in the opening three sessions of the World Endurance Championship prologue ahead of this weekend's series opener at Spa. The best time by one of the Japanese Le Mans Hypercars as we went to press was a 2m04.708s from Jose Maria Lopez on Tuesday morning, compared to the 2m04.168s P2 mark set by Nyck de Vries in the best of the G-Drive Racing ORECA-Gibson 07s in the same session. Filipe Albuquerque topped the times in both sessions on Monday, with the test concluding on Tuesday afternoon. **Photograph by JEP/Motorsport Images**

Chilton joins strong Hyundai electric line-up

PURE ETCR

Hyundai has named its quartet for the new all-electric Pure ETCR series, and it includes British Touring Car Championship veteran Tom Chilton. The 36-year-old joins former factory BMW star Augusto Farfus and World Touring Car Cup force Jean-Karl Vernay in the line-up – neither of whom are a surprise, considering they had already been testing the marque's Veloster N ETCR.

Chilton (right), for whom this is a return to international competition, will dovetail his Pure ETCR campaign with his BTCC programme, which this year is behind the wheel of a Ciceley Motorsport BMW. He has been UK-based since 2017, when he enjoyed his most successful season in the World Touring Car Championship: third overall in a Sebastien Loeb Racing Citroen.

As well as Farfus and Vernay, the squad is completed by Corsican John Filippi, a regular in world tin-top competition.

“Electric-powered racing is a new challenge for me, but as part of the Hyundai Motorsport line-up I think I am in the best place to race for victories,” said Chilton. “I

know the team will have done a great job in developing the car so far. I've worked with John before, but this will be my first time sharing a garage with Augusto and Jean-Karl. They're both very successful in TCR and touring cars in general, so I'm sure they'll be strong competitors and a good benchmark to compare myself to.

“I'm looking forward to driving the Hyundai for the first time in the next few weeks to feel the performance for myself.”

The Hyundai announcement means that eight of the 12 seats for the inaugural Pure ETCR season have been confirmed, with each of the three manufacturers running four cars. Cupra previously revealed two-time DTM champion Mattias Ekstrom, and subsequently Spanish veteran Jordi Gene and youngster Mikel Azcona. The Romeo Ferraris Alfa Romeo team has named only Stefano Coletti.

The season kicks off at Vallelunga on 18-20 June, before heading to Motorland Aragon, the Copenhagen street circuit, the Hungaroring and, finally, the Inje Speedium track in South Korea, which formerly hosted a Super Formula round.





Ogier fined for police incident

WRC

World Rally Championship leader Sebastien Ogier received two fines totalling €7000 and a suspended one-event ban as punishment for his behaviour immediately after a road traffic accident on the final morning of last weekend's Rally Croatia.

Ogier and his Toyota team were summoned before the FIA stewards after footage of the incident began to appear on social media.

According to Toyota's evidence, Ogier and co-driver Julien Ingrassia noticed an

issue with their car that required immediate attention. As they attempted to reach a bus stop, the car was struck on the co-driver's door by a BMW 1 Series travelling at speed. Both cars pulled over and were joined by a Toyota support vehicle while Ogier and the BMW driver swapped details.

A police patrol vehicle then arrived while Toyota gained permission from rally control to continue to the stage start. Ogier then attempted to leave against the wishes of the police officers.

Ogier was not censured for

the nature of the accident but was fined €5000 and handed the suspended ban for his subsequent behaviour towards the police. Social media footage shows Ogier, remonstrating through the open door, accelerate back out into traffic, forcing the policeman attempting to hold the car in place to jump clear.

Ogier was additionally fined €2000 for jumping a red traffic light, which the Frenchman declared was a result of his agitation.

The penalty means that both Ogier and Hyundai's Ott Tanak are to complete the

2021 season with a suspended ban hanging over them. Tanak's offence dates back to Monte Carlo in January, for attempting to drive an unroadworthy vehicle.

On Sunday evening, Ogier posted photographs of himself with the BMW driver and the police officers. "I would like to apologise and clarify the incident from this morning," he said. "Unfortunately there was a big misunderstanding due to the language barrier. Now all is clear, we're all together and we are really happy that no one got hurt."

NICK GARTON

Croatian organisers react to COVID rule flouting

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Organisers of last weekend's Rally Croatia have made clear that the spectators lining the majority of the stages and filling the final powerstage to pre-pandemic levels were not doing so with their blessing.

In accordance with a decree from the Civil Protection Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia, which was made on the Sunday prior to the event, the nation's first World Rally Championship counter, the sale of tickets was prohibited.

The carefully worded statement made no mention of any tickets that may have been sold prior to the final week before the event got under way, but did state: "It is imperative to abide by the COVID-19 regulations issued by the Government and the Institute of Public Health, including but not limited to maintaining a proper social distance of at



least 1.5 metres outdoors, wearing a medical-grade face mask and the ban of gatherings of more than 25 people at one location."

Between February 2020, when the first case was recorded, and the week of the rally, Croatia had seen 322,626 people diagnosed with the virus, of whom 300,492 had recovered and 6854 had died.

Events across Europe continue to be held without the public in attendance, with the UK government organising a series of 'pilot' tests during April, such as the FA Cup semi-final at which limited numbers have been admitted and monitored in anticipation of lifting the lockdown on sports and entertainment this summer.

In Croatia, the rally schedule had already been altered to reduce the potential for crowds to gather, including the removal of a planned superspecial stage in the centre of the capital, Zagreb. Despite these measures, the presence of fans was noticeably high, and Saturday morning's stage 12 had to be delayed because of spectators.

A spokesman for the event said: "Since there was no ticketing it was impossible to control all the people who came to the stages during the night or early in the morning. As organisers, we did warn the people to obey pandemic rules by keeping the distance and wearing the masks."

NICK GARTON

IN THE HEADLINES

SUZUKA'S THREE YEARS

The Suzuka circuit has extended its deal to host the Japanese Grand Prix for three more years, meaning it will appear on the Formula 1 schedule up to and including 2024. F1 boss Stefano Domenicali described the extension as “part of our long-term commitment to growing the sport in Asia”.

RED BULL GETS MERC MAN

Red Bull Powertrains, which will take over development of the Honda F1 engine for the 2022 season, has recruited long-time Mercedes man Ben Hodgkinson as its new technical director. Hodgkinson has been head of mechanical engineering at Mercedes High Performance Powertrains since 2017.

DRUGOVICH HEADS F2 TEST...

Virtuosi Racing ace Felipe Drugovich topped last week's three-day FIA Formula 2 test at Barcelona. The Brazilian's best came on the final morning, when the field tried qualifying simulations on the softer medium-compound Pirelli available, to head Prema Racing's reigning FIA F3 champion Oscar Piastri by 0.160s. Underfinanced MP Motorsport F2 rookie Richard Verschoor headed the second day with a time that stood as third fastest overall. ART Grand Prix's Christian Lundgaard led the opening day on hard rubber and his time on mediums put him fourth overall.

...AND MARTINS TOPS F3

After the FIA F2 boys had finished, it was the turn of their F3 brethren to take to the Circuit de Catalunya for two days to finish their pre-season testing. Reigning Formula Renault Eurocup champion Victor Martins dominated with MP Motorsport, topping both days and finishing up 0.132s clear of ART Grand Prix racer Alexander Smolyar. Jack Doohan finished up third with Trident, while Logan Sargeant, who is not confirmed for the season, was fourth with Charouz Racing System.



“Dad, can we do Le Mans together?” Karter Kevin at 14 with Jan

Magnussens team up at Le Mans

LE MANS 24 HOURS

Jan and Kevin Magnussen will become the latest father-and-son combination to race together in the Le Mans 24 Hours when they team up at the wheel of one of High Class Racing's LMP2 ORECA's in August. Not only is it a dream come true for the pair, but they reckon this year's edition of the big race was probably the last chance to make it happen.

Sportscar stalwart Jan and Kevin, who has joined Peugeot's World Endurance Championship squad for next season, will share the additional High Class ORECA-Gibson 07 entered for Le Mans with team regular Anders Fjordbach. Magnussen Sr has moved over from the team's full-time WEC entry with which he is driving alongside Fjordbach and Dennis Andersen for the family adventure.

“It feels like it is something that we've been talking about forever,” said Magnussen Sr, a veteran of 21 Le Mans starts, 15 of them with Corvette Racing. “It's been on the agenda since Kevin started coming with me to Le Mans when he was karting. He always said he wanted to do the race and reckoned it would be

cool if we could do it together one day.”

This year's centrepiece round of the WEC was probably the final opportunity they will have, he reckoned.

“I'm so happy because this really is the last chance,” explained the 47-year-old. “Kevin is off to Peugeot, and when he's done I'm going to be far too old. This was absolutely the last shot.”

Magnussen Sr revealed that he explored opportunities for his son to make a Le Mans debut alongside him during his final years with the factory Chevrolet Corvette squad. “There was talk about it, but it never really came close, because Kevin would have had to commit to being a third driver for the enduros and do Daytona, Sebring, Petit Le Mans [at Road Atlanta] as well as Le Mans,” he said. “Contracts and calendars always got in the way.”

Magnussen Jr, who is racing in the 2021 IMSA SportsCar Championship with the Chip Ganassi Racing Cadillac squad, is scheduled to get his first taste of one of the High Class ORECA's in June. “Four or five days” of testing are planned ahead of Le Mans on 21-22 August, according to his father.

GARY WATKINS

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TOP 10 TIMES		
POS	DRIVER (CAR)	TIME
1	Gordon Shedden (Honda)	57.108s
2	Jack Goff (Cupra)	57.302s
3	Michael Crees (Honda)	57.307s
4	Tom Ingram (Hyundai)	57.382s
5	Jason Plato (Vauxhall)	57.485s
6	Colin Turkington (BMW)	57.531s
7	Ash Sutton (Infiniti)	57.598s
8	Adam Morgan (BMW)	57.609s
9	Dan Lloyd (Vauxhall)	57.624s
10	Dan Rowbottom (Honda)	57.628s

BTCC

Three-time British Touring Car champion Gordon Shedden topped last week’s official ‘media day’ test at Silverstone on his return to the series after three years out.

The Scot put in a late burst of five quick laps across two short runs, three of which were faster than the best anyone else could manage. That ensured that Shedden’s Team Dynamics Honda Civic Type R ended the day a whopping 0.194 seconds clear.

“That’s still not its ultimate performance for sure,” said Shedden. “Nobody shows their full hand on media day, and certainly

we didn’t either. Some people were even running soft tyres, which there’s no point doing because we only race on the mediums at Silverstone. The set we had [for the quick runs] was quite new, but not brand new.”

Shedden also refused to get carried away, bearing in mind that Colin Turkington and Ash Sutton – winners of the past four BTCC titles between them – did not complete quick runs in the afternoon and relied on their morning times. They were clearly carrying solid levels of ballast, something Shedden confirmed “we only test with, and that was no different”.

Second fastest was the impressive all-new

Team Hard Cupra Leon in the hands of Jack Goff, who went quicker than his session-topping time from the morning. But Goff played down his chances. “Out of the box it’s been pretty close,” he said, “but I don’t think we’re there yet. I think there are a lot of cars running success ballast.”

BTC Racing Honda driver Michael Crees went third fastest with a one-off lap that was 0.3s quicker than the next best he managed, while Tom Ingram had the ExceLR8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N nicely on the pace with fourth fastest time overall from Jason Plato’s Power Maxed Vauxhall.

MARCUS SIMMONS

Van der Drift beats Kiwi heroes to 2021 title

TCR NEW ZEALAND

Chris van der Drift led a batch of big-name Kiwi aces home to claim the inaugural TCR New Zealand title last weekend in the single-event triple-header at Highlands Motorsport Park.

Ex-Formula Master champion and Superleague ace van der Drift (right) won the first two races in a Track Tec Racing Audi RS3 LMS after axle failure struck the

polewinning Hyundai of World Rally Championship star Hayden Paddon. While that put Paddon out of the opener, he took the repaired car to fourth in race two.

Van der Drift was on for a clean sweep in the finale, which he was leading until one-third distance when the Audi jammed in fifth gear. With Gene Rollinson – second in the opening two races – out with a blown head gasket on his Hyundai,

that allowed Paddon through to victory. But fifth place was enough for van der Drift.

Four-time Bathurst 1000 winner Greg Murphy claimed a pair of thirds in the sister Audi to van der Drift’s, and two-time World Touring Car Cup winner Paul Radisich had a fifth in a Volkswagen Golf GTI. But Murphy and Radisich collided on the first lap of the finale, putting both out with suspension failure.





FORMULA E Tributes were paid at last weekend's Valencia Formula E round to Adrian Campos, who died in January aged 60. Campos, from the Valencia region, was a key part of the building of the Ricardo Tormo circuit, and also ran a team in the early years of FE, hence the first-generation car being part of the assembly. The last corner of the track has also been named after Campos in his honour. **Photograph by Motorsport Images**

Alpine penalised by over 100kg

WEC

The Alpine ORECA LMP1 design that will take on the Le Mans Hypercars in this year's World Endurance Championship will go to the grid for this weekend's series opener at Spa weighing more than 100kg more than it started last season.

The weight penalty is among the measures designed to bring the Alpine-Gibson A480, which raced as the Rebellion R-13 in the past two WEC campaigns, into the same performance window as the LMH contenders. The non-hybrid P1s that are allowed to race on into the new era of the WEC for one season need to be slowed by around five seconds per lap at regular WEC circuits to put them in the same ballpark as the LMHs in the Hypercar class.

The minimum weight for the Alpine at Spa has been set at 930kg, which compares with the 824kg at which the Rebellion started the 2019-20 campaign before the system of success handicaps kicked in.

The torque curve for the car's normally aspirated Gibson V8 was also released as part of the Balance of Performance table published on Friday: it allows for a peak power of 600bhp (450kW), a reduction from the near-700bhp the engine was believed to have pushed out with unlimited fuel flow last year.

The Signatech-run Alpine, which will be raced this year by Nicolas Lapierre, Matthieu Vaxiviere and Andre Negrão, will also have to run with low-downforce Le Mans aero at all races.

Signatech team boss Philippe Sinault has played down the team's chances. "We don't know if we can be fully competitive, and I'm sure Toyota and Glickenhaus don't know," he said. "We are certainly not the favourites for the championship, but the important thing is that we are here in Hypercar. That is the first aim: to be on the grid and prepare for a potential future for Alpine in endurance racing."

GARY WATKINS

IN THE HEADLINES

ILOTT IN FP1 FOR ALFA

Ferrari protege Callum Ilott was named as Alfa Romeo's second F1 reserve for the 2021 season just as we went to press. The Briton, who is racing in the GT World Challenge Europe this season in a Ferrari, will share the role with Robert Kubica. He is to make his belated FP1 debut tomorrow (Friday) at the Portuguese Grand Prix with Alfa. Ilott was scheduled to take part in FP1 for last year's Eifel Grand Prix with Haas, only for the session to be fogged off.

WHELDON SONS AT ANDRETTI

The karting sons of the late Dan Wheldon have been named as juniors by IndyCar giant Andretti Autosport. Sebastian and Oliver Wheldon, respectively 12 and 10 years old, will be mentored by the team with which their father won the IndyCar title and the Indy 500. "No one will ever be able to replace Dan in their lives, but we're happy to offer a network for mentorship to help the boys grow their careers," said Michael Andretti.

HELP FOR VIC ELFORD

A crowdfunding page has been set up to help US-based Brit Vic Elford, one of the finest all-rounders in motorsport history, with Brian Redman one of the prime supporters. Elford, 85, is suffering with prostate cancer and a broken leg, and is unable to earn a living by attending vintage car events. The GoFundMe account has already exceeded its target of \$150,000 to help with medical bills and modifications to his home.

BRIT F3 WINNER IN EFO

British Formula 3 race winner Josh Mason has joined the grid for the Euroformula Open series, which kicks off this weekend at the Portuguese GP. Mason will line up with Double R Racing. Another graduate from the UK scene, Rafael Villagomez, will race too. The Mexican British F4 graduate is dovetailing his FIA F3 season with a campaign at Van Amersfoort Racing.

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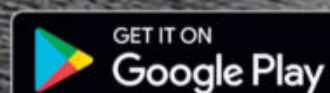
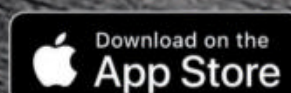
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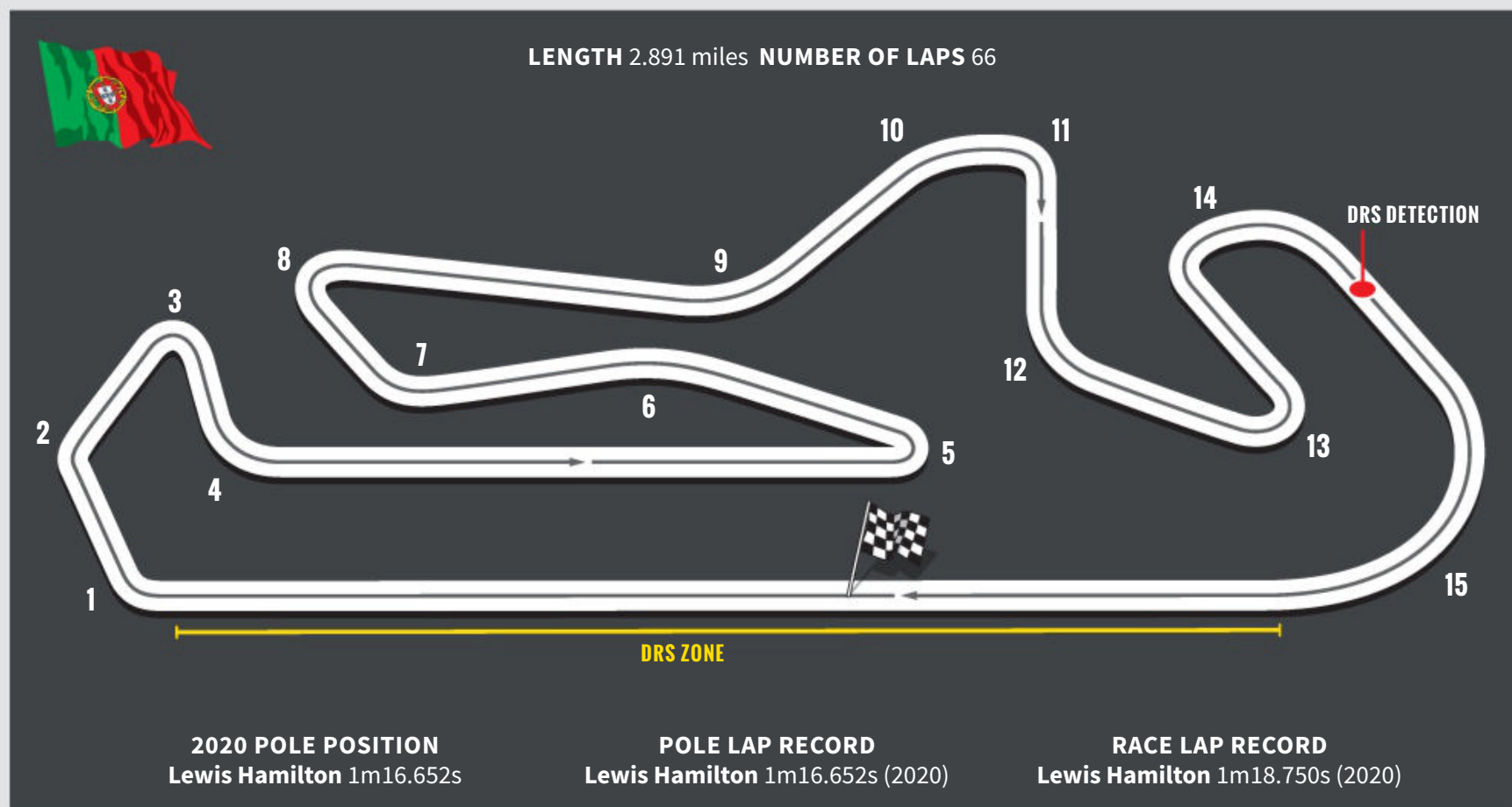
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F1 PORTUGUESE GRAND PRIX PREVIEW



UK START TIMES

Friday 30 April
FP1 1130 FP2 1500

Saturday 1 May
FP3 1200
QUALIFYING 1500

Sunday 2 May
RACE 1500

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SPORTS EXTRA
HIGHLIGHTS
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TYRE ALLOCATION



CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS

Drivers

1	Hamilton	44
2	Verstappen	43
3	Norris	27
4	Leclerc	20
5	Bottas	16

Constructors

1	Mercedes	60
2	Red Bull	53
3	McLaren	41
4	Ferrari	34
5	AlphaTauri	8



RACE STATS

Previous winners

2020	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
1996	Jacques Villeneuve	Williams
1995	David Coulthard	Williams
1994	Damon Hill	Williams
1993	Michael Schumacher	Benetton
1992	Nigel Mansell	Williams
1991	Riccardo Patrese	Williams
1990	Nigel Mansell	Ferrari
1989	Gerhard Berger	Ferrari
1988	Alain Prost	McLaren



Best results

Hamilton	1st x 1
Bottas	2nd x 1
Verstappen	3rd x 1
Leclerc	4th x 1
Gasly	5th x 1
Sainz	6th x 1
Perez	7th x 1
Ocon	8th x 1
Ricciardo	9th x 1
Vettel	10th x 1



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The challenges for F1's star rookie

AlphaTauri's Yuki Tsunoda is fearless and brimming with confidence. He's going to make his share of errors, but what will set him apart is how quickly he eliminates them

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

There ended up being rather a lot to celebrate about the rookie class of the 2001 Formula 1 season. So far, it's racked up four world titles (three in F1), 60 grand prix victories, two Le Mans 24 Hours triumphs, four Daytona 24 Hours wins, an IMSA SportsCar title and two Indianapolis 500 successes. Two of the group are still racing in F1 20 years after their debuts...

But if 2021's F1 rookie class are to have any hope of matching the combined records of Fernando Alonso, Kimi Raikkonen, Juan Pablo Montoya and, not forgetting, Enrique Bernoldi, they're going to have to do one thing. And that's leaving the 'classic rookie errors' in their wake.

Make no mistake, Yuki Tsunoda, Mick Schumacher and Nikita Mazepin have a very difficult job in 2021. They're doing their learning in the unforgiving glare of the F1 spotlight – for good and bad reasons – in carryover cars that most of their rivals gained experience in last year, and errors are of course going to happen.

But what will make the difference for the future careers of the 2021 rookies – possibly setting them on the road to such longevity as most of their 2001 predecessors – is how quickly they leave the typical newbie mistakes behind and go on to grab headline results.

One of the trio has already done the latter and now needs to set about achieving the former. Tsunoda's points-scoring result on his debut in Bahrain last month was magnificent. It featured a

“My dream was not to be a Formula 1 driver, my dream is to be a Formula 1 champion”

series of battling moves that were capped by his last-lap mugging of Lance Stroll, which secured ninth place and embodied an excellent 'never give up' attitude. In 2020, Tsunoda worked hard to improve his in-race mental strength, which made him calmer.

But given his AlphaTauri squad's pace – it currently just edges McLaren and barely trails Ferrari as F1's fourth fastest car based on supertimes calculations – the Bahrain race could have yielded more. Team-mate Pierre Gasly qualified an impressive fifth, having brilliantly got through Q2 on the medium tyres, which only the Mercedes drivers and Max Verstappen also managed. Gasly threw away that hard work in his early clash with Daniel Ricciardo, and it was an attempt to secure the superior strategy of starting on medium tyres that led to Tsunoda dropping from second in Q1 to 13th on the grid and out in Q2.

At Imola next time out, he missed his target of a maiden Q3 appearance with his big crash in Q1, and then in the race ruined his recovery with a spin just after the safety car restart, eventually coming home 12th when more points were possible.

But each of these mistakes has contained something very positive. Red Bull motorsport advisor Helmut Marko put Tsunoda's Imola qualifying crash down to being "overconfident", while AlphaTauri technical director Jody Egginton said the crash that followed Tsunoda getting on the throttle a fraction too early on the Variante Alta kerbs was "part of the rookie journey". But it's the reference to confidence that's key.

Consider Tsunoda's answer to Autosport's question about even attempting to get through Q2 on the mediums – no mean feat for a non-'Class A' squad – in his first F1 qualifying session: "The team had a big question mark for me to go to Q3 with the medium tyre, but I asked them to do the same strategy as Pierre, because I had good confidence to get to Q3 with the medium tyre because the car was performing well."

Again, "confidence". It just exudes from Tsunoda. The question coming out of his starring rookie season in F2 with Carlin was whether he could adapt quickly to the F1 environment. Well, judging by his demeanour in the media spotlight and his excellent team-radio swearing, he's having no problem settling in at the highest level.

Tsunoda has so far been fearless – his Imola race spin came a split-second after he'd opportunistically passed Lewis Hamilton of all people. Following Tsunoda's points in Bahrain, F1 sporting boss Ross Brawn labelled him, probably too early, "the best rookie F1 has had for years". But there's every reason to suspect he has the potential to go on and prove he's indeed as good as the very high-quality new drivers F1 has welcomed in recent years – Verstappen, Charles Leclerc, Lando Norris and George Russell.

Another answer he gave at Imola was revealing. Fielding a question from a young F1 fan about how it felt finding out he was going to be racing in the championship, Tsunoda said: "It feels like a dream come true. But at the same time, my dream was not to be a Formula 1 driver, my dream is to be a Formula 1 champion. So, for me to become a Formula 1 driver is the path for me. It's like, part of that journey."

Such ambition is nothing new in F1 – there's really no point in even trying to crack a career so difficult and expensive if the ultimate achievement isn't the number one aim. But it was the way Tsunoda explained himself that was so striking. Again, confidence.

The Japanese driver's motorsport journey is already very much in motion. Now he needs to begin demonstrating the fast learning that so impressed his F2 team last year to ensure he takes the right path of driver development. If he does, anything is possible. 🏆



The wrong sort of attention

Positive public perception is key to the success of Formula E and electric motivation in general, and that makes Saturday's farcical Valencia race a massive own goal

MATT KEW

FIA president Jean Todt sat down with a few journalists at the Rome E-Prix and told us there needed to be more collaboration between the governing body and the media to boost coverage of Formula E. That alone garnered flak when Autosport ran the story, because people thought it was an attempt to sidestep the more natural and meritocratic process of 'build it and they will come'.

Todt didn't have to wait long to have his wish granted, just 13 days in fact, as Formula E drew all kinds of attention when 11 cars slowed to walking speed in the first Valencia E-Prix last weekend as they ran out of usable energy.

Both the FIA and the championship tried to style these events out as demonstrating how critical race management is to earning success. That is true of Formula E in the main, but attempting to appeal to motorsport fans by extolling the need to massively lift-and-coast is never going to get their hearts beating faster.

Others, this writer included, went the other way and billed it as farcical and wholly damaging for the public profile of the series and the perception of battery-powered vehicles. It does nothing for concern over range anxiety and undermines Formula E's attempt to bill itself as a development testbed for road car technology.

The wonderful world of social media was typically divided. Many took aim at Formula E while others thought it had been

“That similar events to Saturday could have happened on the Sunday should be a worry too”

blown out of proportion. But without wishing to sound like a Vietnam veteran, these commentators weren't there. They weren't speaking to the teams and seeing how enraged everyone was now that valuable points had been thrown away, after they'd been called out by the FIA and by Formula E, and now that they had to explain events to their overlords sitting on the boards of the manufacturers.

By the book, the FIA was right to cut 1kWh of the usable energy limit for each of the 19 minutes spent behind the safety car and under full-course yellows. But this move is made with discretion and so the final-lap controversy needn't have happened. The last 5kWh reduction, which triggered the undesirable chain of events, could just as easily have been a 4 or 3kWh slash or nothing at all.

With two laps of green-flag racing remaining after the final safety car, there wasn't the capacity for drivers to stamp on the

brakes to recover that loss of energy. This rule doesn't suddenly need a rethink as a result, but race director Scot Elkins does arguably need more support. With data on remaining energy available, some quick maths and better foresight might have allowed things to turn out differently.

But if it had to happen, certainly don't throw defending champion Antonio Felix da Costa under the bus, as FIA director of Formula E Frederic Bertrand appeared to do when he called on the DS Techeetah driver to check his pace and allow the race timer to tick to zero to leave a one-lap sprint to the finish.

There is the argument that winner Nyck de Vries (underconsuming energy), Nico Muller (drivethrough penalty) and Stoffel Vandoorne (starting last and with a five-second penalty) got it right as they made the finish at decent speed and with energy levels intact. But as Alexander Sims proved on Sunday, when he served a drivethrough early on and from there never sought to close up to the pack, Muller and Vandoorne were to all intents and purposes out for the count. Had it not been for the mass woes of their rivals, they wouldn't have been on the podium and so can't be held up as paragons of spot-on strategy.

Formula E teams are littered with ex-Formula 1 and former World Endurance Championship engineers. For the series to officially communicate “the race today shows the skill and strategy needed to combine speed and energy management” undermines that talent by putting the blame on them.

The sporting model of Formula E is generally the healthiest element of the championship. There's disquiet over the commercial side of things where, even factoring in the devastating effects of the pandemic, manufacturers have little to show for their involvement over the past 13 months aside from two Esports series. These contests have their merits and are cheap to put on in the dearth of real-world competition, but that's not much to hold on to for OEMs spending the better part of £25million annually to compete in the series.

That similar events to Saturday could have happened on the Sunday, were it not for BMW Andretti instructing its victorious rookie driver Jake Dennis to check his speed and let the race timer elapse, should be a worry too. And Formula E is soon to stop again at a permanent circuit, with a double-header at the Autodromo Miguel E Abed coming on 19-20 June under the new and full 2021 calendar.

This all comes at a time when Formula E is trying to nail down signatures for its Gen3 rules to get manufacturers to wed themselves to the championship until 2025-26. Events such as those in Spain don't help that cause. ❄

P42 VALENCIA E-PRIX REPORT

YOUR SAY

I realise Leclerc is performing quite well, but he has been far from the best driver so far this season

JOE WRIGHT

Too much of a soft spot for Leclerc?

The love for Charles Leclerc in Autosport's driver ratings has left me somewhat dumbfounded. With Bahrain, how on earth does a driver who qualifies fourth and then finishes sixth warrant a 10/10 rating? Your criteria for someone to achieve such a score states there should be an 'exceptional performance, maximising the result'. In my eyes, finishing two places below your grid position is not exceptional. If he was driving an Alfa Romeo and came sixth, that would be exceptional.

Again at Imola, according to your ratings he was the best driver. How can this be? His restart after the red flag was frankly appalling. Lando Norris was clear in stating Leclerc should have overtaken Max Verstappen for the lead, but the Ferrari driver bottled his golden opportunity and was then caught napping on the run to the first corner.

I realise Leclerc is performing quite well, but he has been far from the best driver so far this season. You say he had 'no right' to put a Ferrari fourth on the grid at Imola, but surely Pierre Gasly also has 'no right' to get an AlphaTauri fifth at both events?

To have Leclerc averaging 9.5 over the first two races is bizarre.

I'm not anti-Leclerc, I'm anti your immense soft spot for him.

Joe Wright

Ashford, Kent

In our view, Leclerc's sixth place in Bahrain was 'maximising the result' and his fall from fourth to sixth merely the impact of doing a better job than some others in qualifying, thereby starting further up the grid than the Ferrari deserved. His Imola restart has caused debate at Autosport and is why he was docked a mark in our ratings. Gasly has indeed been performing well, but hasn't yet managed a clean weekend in 2021 – ed

Formula E lapses into farce

I'm not a great fan of Formula E, but thought I would watch it this time as it was being held on a proper track. I thought I was watching *It's a Knockout*, silly gimmicks such as Fanboost are a joke, but the drivers having to eke out energy was a complete farce.

Time was when a rev counter was important, but now it seems a smart meter might be necessary and an Economy 7 tariff! All that



was missing was a team manager playing the joker on the startline and commentary from the late Eddie Waring. It is closer to light entertainment than professional motorsport.

Peter Allen

By email

More Formula E on 'proper' circuits, please

Come on Formula E, we get the environmental message about racing in towns and cities, but Valencia surely proved the case about at least having some races on proper circuits. You at least can see what's going on, and OK Saturday was a bit of a shambles, but I really enjoyed it.

I am looking forward to Monaco (almost a proper race circuit). Every city race tends to look the same, all concrete and fencing.

Chris Davis

By email

Small is beautiful

Might Aston Martin benefit from studying Schumacher? EF Schumacher, that is...

Graeme Innes-Johnstone

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THE RISE OF BRITAIN'S 'OTHER' NEXT F1 CHAMPION

George Russell is billed as heir apparent, but Lando Norris's ascendance is being accelerated by his McLaren team's revival

ALEX KALINUACKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY MCLAREN AND



motorsport
IMAGES



Norris put up a game defence against Hamilton at Imola until he had to succumb



All three British drivers competing in the 2021 Formula 1 season made mistakes in the recent Emilia Romagna Grand Prix. All were relatively minor in the grand scheme of things, but only one of them didn't have major consequences. Lewis Hamilton's slip as he lapped George Russell had him stuck in the Tosa gravel for the best part of a minute, and he then limped back to the pits for a new front wing. The combined time loss would have put him a lap behind eventual race winner Max Verstappen, and dropped Hamilton behind Verstappen in the championship standings, had he not been able to gain the lap back and then put in a recovery drive to finish second thanks to Russell's error.

Just after Hamilton had extricated his W12 from the gravel, Russell's attempt at passing Valtteri Bottas went spectacularly wrong, with both crashing hard after the Williams driver had put two wheels on a damp patch and spun into his rival for a possible 2022 Black Arrows race seat. Given the public rebuke he received from Mercedes chief Toto Wolff after the incident, Russell's remonstrations with Bottas in the Tamburello gravel was arguably a worse mistake, with the stewards finding that neither he nor the Finn was wholly to blame for the shunt...

The third Mercedes-powered British F1 racer's mistake might have ruined his weekend but, as it came before the race day chaos at Imola, Lando Norris was able to complete an impressive redemption story.

His error was running fractionally wide – a "couple of centimetres"

was Norris's own assessment – exiting the high-speed left of Piratella on his final Q3 run in qualifying. That tiny misjudgement, coming through a corner where ultra-commitment married to spot-on car placement is needed to carry the greatest speed all the way down the hill to Acque Minerali, had big consequences. Norris's lap was good enough for third on the grid had it been set in a fully legal manner. As it was, he was dropped to seventh, the time obliterated from the history books.

Norris's quest for redemption was so nearly over just a few seconds into the Imola race, as he slid right passing under the start gantry and almost collided with McLaren team-mate Daniel Ricciardo, then received a hefty whack from Lance Stroll's Aston Martin as they arrived, in near-zero visibility, at the Tamburello chicane for the first time.

After losing two places on the opening lap, Norris rallied from there. The lap after the safety car restart, he brilliantly repassed Stroll and then got former team-mate Carlos Sainz Jr in one blast along the pit straight, nearly adding Pierre Gasly at Tamburello before getting ahead the next time they flashed past the pits. He then charged up behind Ricciardo in fifth, and made an iron-clad case for McLaren imposing team orders. By the end of the lap on which the swap occurred, Norris was 2.7 seconds in front of the Australian. Eight laps later, the gap was 10.3s.

It took the race's suspension for Norris to make further progress, as that meant Charles Leclerc's finely built advantage was erased (Sergio Perez's pre-red-flag pitstop penalty was another slice of good fortune for the McLaren racer). At the restart, Norris pounced when Leclerc failed to stay right with Verstappen. The 21-year-old



SUTTON

also lamented his Ferrari rival for being so accommodating when the Red Bull briefly slid off the road just before the race resumed, as that might have kept the race victory a possibility for all three.

But, once Verstappen roared clear, Norris “just judged what my race was going to be” and quickly abandoned any thoughts of chasing Verstappen down, instead focusing on the difficult challenge of keeping his softer rubber alive to the finish.

Once Hamilton had made it a three-way battle for second as the race entered its closing stages and then passed Leclerc, Norris had nine laps to defy the world champion. For five tours he did so, beautifully placing his car on the long run from the second Rivazza turn up to Tamburello, his MCL35M’s Mercedes engine grunt matching the power in Hamilton’s car. But, eventually, the soft Pirellis cried just enough, and Hamilton used Norris’s slightly slower run down the pit straight to seal a distant second.

Nevertheless, Norris was rightly delighted to equal his best F1 career result. “I don’t think you can ever be disappointed with a podium, so I am very happy for myself for recovering nicely after [qualifying],” he reflected after visiting the rostrum.

“This is what I wanted. To make sure I kind of bounced back and was where I feel like I deserved and should have been. It was a tough race – there was a lot of obstacles and risky moments. I almost crashed into



TEE

Imola podium felt like a “deserved” result

“I DON’T THINK YOU CAN EVER BE DISAPPOINTED WITH A PODIUM, SO I’M VERY HAPPY FOR MYSELF”

Daniel at the start. There were a lot of moments where it could have been over, but we stayed in it to the end and made a lot of right decisions and ended up P3. It’s just a long race – with the red flag and everything it felt like a long race. It was a very good one obviously.”

But that fine result was not the sole example Norris has produced of late. Only three weeks previously, he’d finished as best of the rest behind the leading Mercedes pair and Red Bull with fourth place in the season-opening Bahrain GP. That was just as meritorious as his fifth place in the 2020 season-ending Abu Dhabi GP, in which the full contingent of ‘Class A’ runners (Mercedes and Red Bulls) occupied the top four places. Just a couple of races before that, Norris had been fourth in the Bahrain GP again, behind Hamilton and the two Red Bulls.

After Norris had secured his Imola podium, McLaren team principal Andreas Seidl rather neatly summed up what such a run of results means for the progress of a driver only just entering his third F1 season.

“What was obviously very encouraging to see as well is how >>

Lando is flying at the moment,” said Seidl. “Two race weekends now in a row [in 2021] where he showed that he definitely made the next step as a driver. I’m very happy with that.

“Results like the ones he had in Bahrain and here is a great confirmation for himself that he’s heading in the right direction. The most obvious thing for me is the lap times he’s putting in consistently, which is the most important thing. As I said many times, ‘If these lap times don’t come, I can’t fix it’. It’s got to come from these guys.

“But in the end these lap times are also the result of the hard work he has put in with his team, with our engineering team, again over the winter in order to learn from his second season in F1 last year, to digest it in the right way and make the right conclusions and come back this year clearly being in a position to make the next step.”

It’s not just on the track where Norris has been impressing McLaren. His bouncy persona is a clear winner with fans getting their F1 fix in new places — such as Netflix’s *Drive to Survive* or streaming his Esports exploits — and he’s regularly forthright with his viewpoints in the media.

But one of the best examples of his off-track excellence also came last time out at Imola, and it concerned his ability to successfully move on from a damaging position. After being informed that he’d lost his final Q3 effort, Norris was notably downbeat and self-critical on his team radio, nearly reaching Leclerc levels of self-scolding. He later told TV crews that he’d “effed it all up” with his slip beyond track limits. Come Sunday, however, he was able to shake off the error and reach a glittering result. It’s

a strength that not all sportspeople can achieve quickly, and is something Seidl hopes will hold Norris, and McLaren overall, in good stead as the season develops.

“I can clearly see that also in terms of personality,

character, that he made the next step, which is also normal for these young guys,” Seidl explained. “It’s also what you would expect from these guys, because they need to make these steps in their early years if they want to become top drivers.

“I am obviously very happy with what I’ve seen so far from Lando this year. [It’s] super-important now to pull this off in the first two races, weekend by weekend, which is a big challenge for a Formula 1 driver because the season of 23 races is very intense.

“The sun is also not always shining. It’s always [good to] have these great moments that we could experience again these first two weekends, and then it’s important to stay focused, keep the positivity up, the energy levels up, and pull it off again next session when you jump in the car.”

When Norris does indeed climb aboard his MCL35M at this weekend’s Portuguese GP, he will be doing so alongside an F1 race winner for just the third time in his career. Ricciardo has brought his impressive reputation, experience of seven F1 victories, and overall racing nous to McLaren for 2021. And it’s Ricciardo’s pedigree, as well as the point in his career (like Sainz, Sergio Perez, Sebastian Vettel and Fernando Alonso, he’s a non-rookie making a new start at a different team this year) that matters when considering the context of Norris’s current rise in form and results.

How the young hotshot would fair against a proven entity in Ricciardo was always going to be one of the stories of 2021. Both have something to lose if they end up second best in the intra-McLaren scrap, but arguably only Norris can gain considerably if he wins out. The final result

will, of course, only be known at the campaign’s conclusion, but in the first two races he has shone while his team-mate has noticeably struggled.

Ricciardo did outqualify Norris in Bahrain, and officially did

“THESE LAP TIMES ARE A RESULT OF THE HARD WORK HE HAS PUT IN”



McLaren celebrates its third place in the constructors’ points last year

so again at Imola, but in the season opener he came home seventh, feeling unimpressed with his own performance. Afterwards, McLaren said he'd sustained floor damage in early contact with Gasly. The next time out, he dutifully let Norris past when the team order came through, eventually coming home three places behind and, wincingly, nearly 30s adrift after struggling with graining on his soft tyres much earlier than his team-mate in the crucial final stint.

McLaren felt Norris was feeling fully confident in the car across the Imola weekend, once the team had successfully adjusted after a challenging opening day of practice, and reckoned that was the difference between the results the pair ultimately achieved. When it comes to getting to that point, Ricciardo feels it's "hard to put a number on it".

"But I think even if personally I'm not getting everything out of it yet, the thing that gives me confidence is looking at the potential of the car," he explained. "It's there and it's pretty good. It can do more than I think it can, as far as just carrying more speed through the corners and [knowing] the car's going to stick."

"So, I think there's a little bit of trust in the car [still to come], but I don't think it's just like 'turn in and close your eyes and it's gonna stick', a lot of it is technique as well. I try not to say as excuses from the past, but there are probably still some old habits that I need to flush out a little bit, and things that perhaps don't work as well for this car."

"I think each lap I turn it's getting better. So, when will I perfect it? Hopefully sooner rather than later, but naturally the more laps I do the faster I'll get and hopefully then we'll start to see the real potential, because it's encouraging to be up in the mix. A lot to be excited for this year – I think the sport in general is all pretty tight, so I'm OK with it. I'm certainly happy with the progress we've made [at Imola], and there's still more to come. I'll be patient yet persistent."

McLaren knows Ricciardo is not far from finding "these last two-three-four tenths, which then make the difference when you're really not comfortable to push these cars to the limit", according to Seidl. And it cannot be denied that Ricciardo and his fellow drivers adjusting to life in new teams are at a significant disadvantage thanks to the circumstances of the season. The decision to reduce testing to three days overall, which means one and a half for each individual driver at most teams, means they are just that bit further behind when it comes to gelling with the new machinery. Plus, all the incumbent drivers gain again when



considering that the majority of their cars' design philosophies have been carried over from 2020.

But those final few tenths will surely come from Ricciardo – he's too good a driver to be written off this early in a season, and he's also committed to making things work at McLaren, given that he signed a three-year deal to race there. Form is temporary, but class is permanent, as the cliché goes. In Ricciardo's case that is comfortingly reassuring.

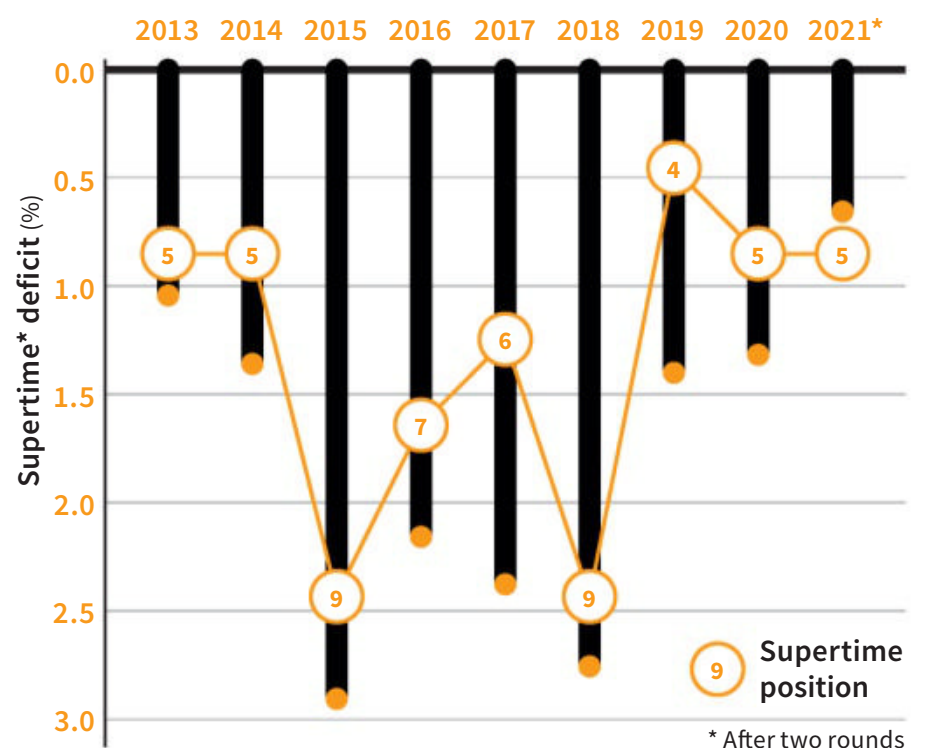
It also suggests that the intra-McLaren scrap is set to get closer and even more compelling as the season progresses. And that's a very good thing for the team. Given the lack of fireworks between Norris and Sainz during their two years as team-mates (no matter how hard *Drive to Survive* tried to suggest there were last year!), Ricciardo eventually reaching Norris's level and continuing to be the team player he was at Imola surely suggests, assuming he does the latter, that McLaren stands to gain further.

It's currently in a close battle with Ferrari to retain the third place it won in such tight circumstances in 2020, with the rest of the midfield squads significantly adrift already after just two rounds. It seems as if Ferrari just has the edge on pace now, with AlphaTauri >>



McLAREN'S PACE SINCE 2013

Since its major overhaul following a dismal 2018 season, McLaren has climbed rapidly towards the frontrunning pace. This graph shows the supertimes gap to the front since McLaren last had the fastest car in F1 in 2012. Supertimes are based on the fastest single lap by each car at each race weekend, expressed as a percentage of the fastest single lap overall (100.000%) and averaged over the season.





also in the mix, but Ferrari needs its drivers to be exceptional to reach its full potential. McLaren has Norris consistently delivering and Ricciardo set to improve.

"I definitely would say that it is a deserved podium," Seidl said of the merits of Norris's Imola result. "If you look at the two guys in the end in front of us, they are the reference in this sport, together with their teams at the moment. Therefore, it is obviously very good to finish in P3.

"But obviously a lot was happening in that race. And it's important also to not again get carried away with this result. If you look at how quickly Max could drive away in the last stint [Verstappen was 0.7s per lap faster in the time Norris occupied second], then you see that we still have a lot of work to do.

"But, overall, it was very encouraging to see in quali and in the race a confirmation for us again that the entire team, together with our colleagues from Mercedes [see panel, right for more on McLaren's readjustment to life back with Brixworth-built engines] over the winter, did a great job.

"I can only thank every member of the team for doing this great job — we made a great step forward again with the car.

"IT'S IMPORTANT TO NOT GET CARRIED AWAY WITH THIS RESULT"

That's obviously important in order to keep this positive momentum up. And that's key also [in] making these steps in order to get back to the front again in F1."

And this is why Norris's current form matters. Although he's still very young, he's getting pretty experienced as an F1 driver. But, judging by his form since the final races of 2020, he's not stagnating and is continuing to make the progress his team expects. If he can continue on this track, then there's a very good reason for his fans to be hopeful of further and increased success.

Russell currently has the 'on-paper' best chance of following in Hamilton's illustrious footsteps to become Britain's 11th F1 world champion. After all, he's a junior driver for F1's dominant squad — even if its grip on that spot has been somewhat shaken by the rear-floor changes in comparison to Red Bull — and his pace to threaten Bottas should surely be Wolff's key takeaway when analysing their crash fallout.

But the rules reset coming for 2022 means that, even if Russell does replace Bottas, it's far from guaranteed that his new team would retain its place as F1's leading squad. In fact, with Mercedes power, it could just as conceivably be McLaren heading the pack. The team has shown that it can engineer and build its way out of the Honda doldrums, and is continuing its upward trend. The new cars offer it a chance to jump ahead.

After qualifying last time out, Norris said: "I guess coming into the [Imola] weekend, I wouldn't have said we could have been P2 [on the grid, where he provisionally was when he crossed the line for the final time in Q3].

"I think it was obvious that Red Bull and Mercedes were quite a way ahead after Bahrain, but they weren't miles away, and I think [at Imola] we showed that when we get it right, once we understand the car a little bit more, we can be there and we can fight the Mercedes and the Red Bull and so on.

"It's nice to know, it's good things. But we're still very early in the season, there's still a lot of unknowns for us. So, we're taking it one step at a time and sometimes we really do just need to wait and see where we're going to be."

It's entirely possible that Norris's and McLaren's respective rises will continue. And although there's still plenty of work to do before they get there, there's not all that much further to go before they reach F1's highest peaks. ❧

RENEWING A FAMOUS PARTNERSHIP

COATES



After six years apart, most of them quite painful for McLaren, the team is once again using Mercedes power in Formula 1.

The renewed partnership, a far cry from the works status McLaren had between 1995 and 2009, was announced in 2019. The date of the resumption didn't change amid the COVID-19 pandemic, but the switch of engine suppliers for 2021 eventually became a unique challenge. The restrictions imposed when it came to the teams adapting their 2020 designs for use again this year meant that McLaren had to spend its two development tokens solely at the rear of the MCL35M, to make sure the new power unit fitted inside the chassis. This was eased, said McLaren technical director James Key, by the svelte nature of the engine itself.

"The Mercedes installation is

"WHAT HAS BECOME CLEAR IS THAT MERCEDES' INSTALLATION IS VERY GOOD TO WORK WITH"

certainly extremely tidy," he explained at McLaren's season launch. "You can see how much attention to detail has gone into it. It's very straightforward to package in that respect, and that has given us a few plus points.

"What has become clear over recent



McLaren last won the constructors' title in 1998 – with Mercedes power

SCHLEGELMILCH

months is that Mercedes' installation is very good to work with. We had to install the engine in this homologated environment, and I think working with Mercedes, and with the power unit they're supplying us, it has made it reasonably easy to shoehorn this engine into an otherwise homologated car."

Although it was a straightforward task fitting the Mercedes engine into the MCL35M (the car features parts such as its nose design, which McLaren added before the end of 2020 in anticipation of the required rear token spend reducing its design freedom further), McLaren still had to contend with a reduced testing window to ensure its systems were working perfectly. After taking its time with the car build, it wisely scheduled a 'filming day' test at Silverstone post-launch, to ensure it had time to run the engine again on the dyno with Mercedes.

After a strong showing in Bahrain,

a track where engine performance is a significant factor, McLaren was keen to praise its returning power partner.

"A big thank you also to our colleagues from Mercedes," said team principal Andreas Seidl. "They've worked so hard also over the winter with us in order to make sure we were ready for the first race."

Ron Dennis famously said that customer teams cannot beat works operations running the same engines to F1 titles. Back in 2014, it was a justification for McLaren's soon-doomed switch to Honda power. But the gaps in the field are closing up, and F1's 2022 rules are intended to break the cycle of a single team dominating the championship. If they work as hoped, then McLaren will want to finally prove its former suprema wrong when it comes to racing and beating Mercedes in the future.

SEASON
PREVIEW

ENDURANCE RACING'S NEW BEGINNING

The entry for this weekend's Spa season opener is modest, but good things are ahead for world sportscar competition

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**



A new era starts for sportscar racing this weekend, what surely will be a golden one at that. Not that you would guess it by scanning down the entry list for Saturday's opening round of the World Endurance Championship at Spa. There are only three cars entered in the new Hypercar class, and one of those is an old LMP1 machine. Yet it's who we know is coming that makes the future of top-flight prototype racing in the WEC and at the Le Mans 24 Hours such a mouthwatering prospect.

Toyota's new Le Mans Hypercar and the Signatech-run Alpine team's ORECA-Gibson P1 design, which raced as the Rebellion R-13 over the past two seasons, will be joined by boutique manufacturer Glickenhaus sooner rather than later this season. Peugeot will arrive with an LMH in 2022, but the year after that is when it really all kicks off.

Ferrari will end its absence from the pinnacle of sportscar racing as a factory after 50 years when it brings out an LMH in 2023, while Porsche and Audi are returning to the WEC's top division after much shorter absences via a second route into the Hypercar class. They are building LMP2-based LMDh hybrid prototypes for campaigns in both the WEC and the IMSA SportsCar Championship in North America. Both look pretty much certain to be represented in the WEC by a factory team and, in the fullness of time, customers.

That makes for a scrumptious future, not least because the top three in the all-time Le Mans winners' table will be slugging it out in the WEC come 2023. Porsche's 19, Audi's 13 and Ferrari's nine Le Mans combined, with three each for Toyota and Peugeot, make 47. So between them, the marques already committed to the new era of the WEC have notched up victories in more than 50% of the races since the 24 Hours was inaugurated back in 1923.



Ferrari and Porsche will finally battle for overall Le Mans honours, as in 1970

"What's not to like?" says Jim Glickenhaus, the brainchild of the marque that bears his name. "Great-looking cars from some great manufacturers racing at great circuits around the world."

That's a spot-on assessment of the future that lies in front of sportscar racing right now, and one that offers an insight as to why. Manufacturers can style their cars to look like their road-going machinery and then race them across the two major championships in the world. (IMSA is definitely working towards allowing LMH machinery, though it has yet to make a firm commitment.) A car maker can get a double return on a relatively modest investment. The same aerodynamic rules that prescribe maximum downforce and minimum drag to make it affordable also offer the chance to >>



Alpine and Toyota form the top class for now, but that should grow from 2022

build lookalikes. The windtunnel is no longer king when it comes to the shape of the cars.

There has already been more good news, and there is undoubtedly more to come. Honda's Acura brand has committed to LMDh in North America. It's not a global brand and doesn't sell cars in Europe, but it will be on the grid at Le Mans if Wayne Taylor, whose eponymous team is now part of the Japanese company's roster, has anything to do it with.

So that's six major car manufacturers as well as Glickenhaus committed to the Hypercar class. Or double the number that slugged it out in LMP1 in the WEC, not counting Nissan's brief and unsuccessful dalliance in 2015. That's put it at least on a par with the original version of what can generically be called the world sportscar championship in its late-1980s Group C pomp. And also more than raced at Le Mans in days when there was no world series in the late 1990s. There were five manufacturers chasing outright glory in both 1998 and 1999, plus Panoz, the period equivalent of Glickenhaus.

There could be more marques coming. General Motors, currently racing in IMSA's outgoing Daytona Prototype international class with Cadillac, is evaluating segueing into LMDh with one of its brands, while Renault-owned Alpine is looking at what to do beyond this year. McLaren has long since made clear its aspirations to race at the front of the field at Le Mans, while Bentley and BMW are among the manufacturers to have expressed interest in joining the party. IMSA has put the number of manufacturers interested in LMDh as well into double figures.

But as glorious as the new era could be, it's not going to be a bed of roses, not in the two seasons before Audi, Porsche and Ferrari arrive in 2023, and not when we get to that nirvana.

Everything suggests that the two Glickenhaus-Pipo 007LMHs will be at round two of this year's campaign at the Algarve Circuit in Portugal in mid-June, but when there will be another new-rules contender on the grid isn't clear. Peugeot hasn't decided when it will start racing over the course of 2022. No decision will be made until after it starts testing its new contender at the back end of this year. That could mean a very slim grid until well into next season.

The Hypercar class, as the top division of the WEC is simply yet confusingly called, allows for multiple ways to skin the cat. The provision is still there, it should be pointed out, for someone to come with a road-based car, as Aston Martin was planning with its Valkyrie until early last year.

The WEC is going to be fought out by machinery built to at least two rulesets, and LMH allows for different architectures of cars. The Toyota is a four-wheel-drive hybrid, as will be the Peugeot, while the Glickenhaus is rear-drive without energy retrieval. The LMDh rules mandate a spec rear-axle hybrid system. The job of the rulemakers – the FIA and the Automobile Club de l'Ouest – will be to equate the performance of the cars.

It would be fatuous to pipe up and say that it would be better if there was just one set of rules. Some have suggested that the



Vasselon is not a fan of BoP but accepts it is key to building grids



Glickenhaus will join the WEC during the 2021 campaign

WEC should have adopted what became LMDh lock, stock and barrel. But that's to ignore the tortuous journey that has brought sportscar racing to its current point. Don't forget that the original LMH rules, which were very different to what we have ended up with, were published back in December 2018. There were multiple twists and turns along the way even before LMDh was announced in January of 2020.

"It's difficult to rewrite history, you can't rewind," says Pascal Vasselon, Toyota Gazoo Racing Europe technical director. "It has all been related to what the manufacturers around the table wanted."

Toyota wanted to be able to develop a car with its own hybrid system, not to use a spec or one-make unit as prescribed in the LMDh rules. Put simply, no LMH would have meant no Toyota, and no Glickenhaus for that matter. "An LMDh wouldn't have been our car," says marque founder Jim, who finds it amusing that he has built his own car, while Porsche, for all its rich sportscar pedigree, is developing a contender based on an off-the-shelf P2.



Alpine will face Toyota with old, restricted LMP1 machinery



**“WE ARE PLEASED THE STRATEGY IS
PAYING OFF AND THE CHAMPIONSHIP
HAS A LOT OF MOMENTUM”**

Toyota has always
preferred the ‘purer’
LMH route for its Hypercar

The WEC was never going to disenfranchise Toyota, its longest-serving participant in its top class. That makes it difficult to imagine where the series would be right now had it abandoned the LMH rules.

Those rules underwent a major philosophical change on their long and winding road. The idea that performance of different varieties of car would need to be equated under a Balance of Performance was adopted along with the road-car route at Aston Martin’s insistence. It was a condition of its commitment announced on the eve of Le Mans in 2019.

Toyota has never made any secret of its dislike of the BoP. “We are not fans of the BoP, but we have accepted it and stayed in the series for one reason – because it will attract more competitors,” says Vasselon. “It was the only way, and we are very pleased that the strategy is paying off and the championship has a lot of momentum.”

It is easy to look back at the efforts of the rulemakers to balance Toyota’s TS050 HYBRID with the non-hybrid LMP1 privateers over the course of the 2018-19 WEC superseason and conclude that equating hybrid four-wheel-drive machinery with non-hybrids driven through the rear wheels is a near-impossibility. Yet that is to overlook a key difference between then and now.

Hybrid punch is no longer the performance tool it was. Not only is a total power for the cars laid down – 500kW or 670bhp – but so too is the power curve of the complete powertrain. No longer can hybrid boost be used to nip past slower cars in traffic.

Nor is there a significant traction advantage from a front-axle energy-retrieval system. Hybrid power cannot be deployed until the car has reached 120km/h or 75mph in the dry, and a higher figure between 140 and 160km/h in the wet that had yet to be published as we went to press.

Tyre longevity can be another key advantage of four-wheel drive. The rules allow two sets of tyre widths to LMH participants: 14in front and rear, and 13.5in front and 15in rear (LMDh rules will mandate the second option). Toyota has chosen the former and Glickenhaus the latter.

Michelin, now the one-make supplier in the Hypercar class, doesn’t believe that whether a car is two or four-wheel-drive will be the main differentiator in tyre wear. “The most important technical parameter that affects tyre life is the load, which is weight plus downforce,” says Michelin motorsport director Matthieu Bonardel.

But he is adamant that Michelin will not produce “tyres that degrade as a BoP tool”. It will be developing different tyres for different architectures of car, what he calls families, and can’t say for sure right now that Peugeot’s 2022 LMH contender will run on the same tyre as Toyota’s GR010 HYBRID.

“Our job is to ensure that every car gets a good level of performance and longevity, and safety of course,” explains Bonardel. “If we force people with significant differences in architecture to use the same tyres, it will be unfair. Everyone will have access to the same technology.”

Vasselon stresses that the BoP will have a role to play in ironing out any differences in tyre longevity: “Tyre degradation will be captured by the BoP process. It will capture the stint lap time profiles and will compensate for the degradation.”

That suggests the BoP could militate against wheel-to-wheel racing because the car that looks after its tyres better will be ‘bopped’ to be slower in peak performance on fresh rubber. But Vasselon doesn’t believe that there will be big differences in tyre longevity between the cars. “The choice of the bigger rear tyre for the two-wheel-drive cars should compensate for that,” he says.

There will also be no advantage in the length of a stint that a hybrid car, which is regenerating energy out on track, can achieve, explains Vasselon. “We no longer talk about fuel, only acceleration energy,” he says. “All cars will be given the same amount of acceleration energy, which will set the stint length, only the hybrids will use less fuel.”

There appears to be a confidence that the different types of car that will eventually appear in the Hypercar division will be able to compete on equal terms. What’s more, the FIA and the ACO have got two years to fine-tune the process. So roll on 2023. 🏁

SEASON
PREVIEW

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR IN WEC 2021

Behind the headline-grabbing hypercars there are numerous subplots and changes for the new season

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES



A BIG-NAME GT TEAM IN THE PROTOTYPE RANKS

WRT is pretty much the benchmark in the GT3 arena. Since the Belgian team was set up for 2010, it's won just about everything worth winning with Audi, the Spa and Nurburgring twice-around-the-clock enduros and the Bathurst 12 Hours included. Now it has expanded full-time into prototypes after a couple of years dovetailing its GT programmes with the DTM. It's difficult not to make the team one of the pre-season favourites in LMP2.

Team boss Vincent Vosse doesn't see it like that, even after victory for the team's European Le Mans Series squad in April with a line-up including Robert Kubica. He only admits to much more modest aspirations.

"We're aiming by the end of the season to be the kind of team that a driver would want to join for next year," says the Belgian, who is a

veteran of six starts at the Le Mans 24 Hours. "I want to win, of course, but we are not expecting to win. We are here to learn through the season."

And there is still stuff still to learn, Barcelona victory (pictured above) or not, reckons Vosse: "I was a bit surprised by the result, which didn't show the true picture. We had the pace, but our pitstops were not the best. They were average, but we didn't make any bad pitstops. We won because the race ran smoothly for us and it didn't for our rivals."

The rhetoric may be conservative, but the line-up Vosse has assembled for his solo ORECA-Gibson 07 in the WEC is proof of the team's intent. He has brought in Virgin Formula E man Robin Frijns, a driver to whom he gave a sportscar break back in 2015, to lead the attack. The Dutchman



EHRHARDT

A P2 ON THE OVERALL PODIUM

The LMP2s have been slowed for the new season to ensure they're a suitable distance behind the Hypercars, which should be five to six seconds slower than an unrestricted LMP1. The one-make Gibson V8 in the back of all the LMP2 cars has been robbed of 60 or so horsepower, the cars will have to run low-downforce Le Mans aero at all tracks, and there's a new range of, it seems, harder tyres from Goodyear, now the one-make supplier in the class. But the smart money has to be on the P2 winner making it onto the overall podium at some point during 2021.

It's only previously happened on four occasions since the WEC's restart in 2012, but with only five full-season entrants in Hypercar, including new cars from Toyota and Glickenhaus, it has to be a possibility just on reliability. Or perhaps if the weather conspires against the cars in the top class.

The Hypercar sporting rules allow Michelin, the supplier in the top class, to produce only two specifications of wet-weather tyre for the season. It has opted to not to bring an intermediate, whereas in P2 Goodyear has a full wet and an inter at the disposal of its teams. The Goodyear intermediate, and previously its predecessor produced by sister company Dunlop, has proved particularly effective over the years. What chance some Ardennes drizzle this weekend to hand the best of the P2 runners an advantage?

TWO ALL-FEMALE LINE-UPS

The all-female line-ups in the Signatech-run Richard Mille Racing LMP2 ORECA and the Iron Lynx Ferrari team's 'Iron Dames' GTE Am entry mean there will be a record number of women racing full-time in an FIA championship this year.

Alfa Romeo Formula 1 test driver Tatiana Calderon, Sophia Florsch and Beitske Visser share the Signatech ORECA, while Katherine Legge, who was originally part of the Mille team backed by the FIA's Women in Motorsport initiative, drives with Rahel Frey and Manuela Gostner in one of the two Iron Lynx Ferrari 488 GTE Evos.



Calderon, Florsch
and Visser share
Signatech ORECA

FLAMAND/DPPI



WRT's solo entry will
be crewed by Frijns,
Habsburg and Milesi

BRUTUSMEDIA

shares with ex-DTM regular Ferdinand Habsburg and sometime Super Formula racer Charles Milesi, who is the silver-rated driver in the line-up.

It's an impressive crew for the debutant squad, one that a rival team boss suggested gives WRT nowhere to hide.

A (PROTOTYPE) STAR IN A REASONABLY PRICED (GT) CAR

There's a new, yet familiar face among the GT specialists on the grid in the GTE Pro class. Neel Jani returns to the wheel of a Porsche in the WEC three years on from the end of its LMP1 programme with the 919 Hybrid, a car in which he won Le Mans and the WEC title in 2016. It's an interesting call by the German manufacturer to put him alongside Kevin Estre in one of the Manthey-run 911 RSRs, one that's clearly motivated by what is to come in 2023, when it will be back in the top division with a new LMDh prototype.

Jani, for all his prototype experience, isn't a total stranger to GT machinery. Back in 2010, he contested half a dozen rounds of the FIA GT1 World Championship aboard a Matech Ford GT, and before that had a one-off at the wheel of a Lamborghini in

the FIA GT Championship.

The Swiss joined Porsche's GT roster at last November's Sebring 12 Hours IMSA SportsCar Championship finale and, after some proper testing over the winter, believes he's now up to speed. But he reckons he still has a lot to learn about the new discipline.

"It feels like I'm back at the beginning of my career," says Jani, who returned to the Rebellion Racing LMP1 squad with which he started out in prototypes for the 2018-19 WEC superseason. "I'm well prepared, but it's always going to be tough going up against the GT pros who've driven these cars for years and years.

"There are going to be things that I only find out when I get out there in the races. I haven't even done a double stint on the tyres yet."



PORSCHE

A CORVETTE ON THE GRID IN EUROPE

Chevrolet has contested a smattering of WEC rounds away from Le Mans in the past, but never in Europe. In fact, Spa this weekend will be the first time that its Corvette Racing team has run a car on European asphalt, Le Mans excepted, since a Michelin tyre test at Misano more than a dozen years ago when it borrowed a C6.R GT1 from one of its European customers.

The appearance of a solo Corvette C8.R in Belgium for Oliver Gavin and Antonio Garcia to drive together – a first for two great mates – is all about preparing for Le Mans, where the new mid-engined car will be racing for the first time this year after Corvette Racing's withdrawal in 2020. There's probably been a bit of political coercion from WEC promoter the Automobile Club de l'Ouest along the way, too.

"It's a good warm-up for Le Mans," says Gavin, who stepped down from the team's full-time line-up at the end of last year's IMSA SportsCar Championship. "It gives the team a chance to get its head back around

WEC rules. It is very different to IMSA, no doubt. Every year I went to Le Mans with the team there was always a minor panic, something the team has missed or something the scrutineers don't like."

The C8.R wasn't competitive on its WEC debut at the Austin round of the 2019/20 campaign in February of last year. The car was given what might be described as a conservative Balance of Performance. This time around, Gavin is hopeful that the latest BoP announced for the 'Vette last week will allow it to compete with Porsche and Ferrari. "We're all keeping our fingers crossed," he says. "We want to show up and be in the mix. Running around half a second or a second off the pace isn't what any team or driver wants."

The Spa appearance could be a portent of things to come for Corvette Racing. It has hinted that it intends to play a more active role in the WEC in the future: next year its C8.R will be legislated out of the IMSA SportsCar Championship on the introduction of the GT Daytona Pro class for GT3 machinery in place of GT Le Mans.



DOLE

NEW QUALIFYING FORMAT

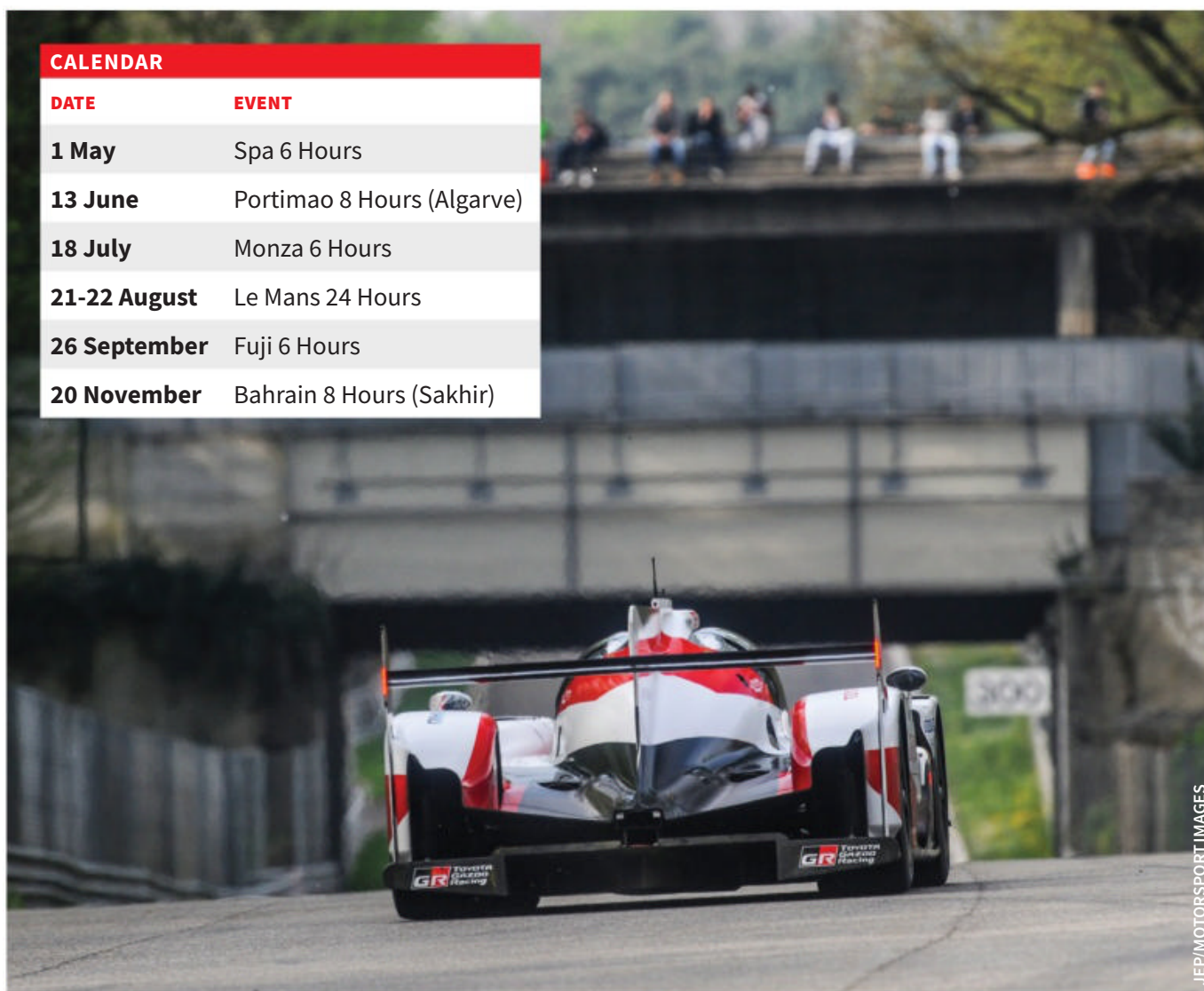
The old aggregate qualifying introduced back in year two of the reborn WEC in 2013 is no more. A system based on fastest laps of a pair of drivers, initially two for each and then one from 2015, has been ditched to bring the rest of the series in line with Le Mans and its new-for-2020 Hyperpole session for the fastest six cars from each class in an initial qualifying on the first day of running. What's taken its place is hardly revolutionary. It's now just one driver against the clock. The only twist is that in GTE Am it's the bronze-rated driver who has to set the time.



SBLOXHAM

CALENDAR

DATE	EVENT
1 May	Spa 6 Hours
13 June	Portimao 8 Hours (Algarve)
18 July	Monza 6 Hours
21-22 August	Le Mans 24 Hours
26 September	Fuji 6 Hours
20 November	Bahrain 8 Hours (Sakhir)



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



...AND A NEW MAN AT THE HELM

The sometimes autocratic Gerard Neveu left the employ of Le Mans Endurance Management, the ACO subsidiary that runs the WEC as well as the ELMS, at the end of last year. His replacement as chief executive officer is Frederic Lequien (above), another Frenchman. Spa will be the newcomer's first race in the hot seat, so it's difficult to judge what effect the change of leadership will have on the championship just yet.

IN CASE YOU DIDN'T NOTICE: A NEW-LOOK CALENDAR

The WEC's so-called 'winter season' schedule has been binned after a solitary season: it was an inevitable casualty of the world health crisis. Don't forget that the current campaign was originally due to begin last September, but the 2019-20 championship didn't actually finish until November after a COVID-enforced rejig. We're now back to a schedule run over a calendar year with the Le Mans 24 Hours at its centre. Well, almost. The French enduro has been pushed back to August, making it the fourth of the six events rather than the third.

The reduced six-round schedule – down from the previous eight races – reflects the economic uncertainties of our times. But it's already taken a pounding as a result of restrictions on international

travel. The WEC had been due to kick off with the Sebring 1000 Miles in March, but that was replaced by an eight-hour event at the Algarve Circuit initially scheduled for the first weekend of April.

This weekend's Spa fixture became the opening round when Le Mans was pushed back, and then Algarve took the 24 Hours' traditional slot in the middle weekend of June. It's been difficult to keep up sometimes. It does look certain, however, that world championship endurance racing will belatedly return to Monza in July. The Italian venue, which was scheduled as the second round of the original 2020-21 campaign last autumn, will be hosting its first such event since Peugeot and Toyota 3.5-litre Group C cars duked it out in what was known as the Sportscar World Championship back in 1992.

NEXT WEEK

SPA 6 HOURS REPORT 6 MAY ISSUE

A new era for endurance racing begins this weekend. Read our full round-up of all the action from the Ardennes circuit.

RACE CENTRE

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Ogier pips Evans in battle of dynamos of Zagreb

The inaugural WRC-counting Rally Croatia turned into a thriller that wasn't settled until the final stage split the Toyota pair

NICK GARTON

PHOTOGRAPHY MCKLEIN



Points leader Ogier performs with a picturesque Balkan backdrop

The debut appearance of Rally Croatia on the World Rally Championship calendar delivered a thrilling battle for victory between the Toyotas of Elfyn Evans and Sebastien Ogier. It ended with reigning champion Ogier taking honours by the third smallest WRC margin on record: just 0.6 seconds.

The Balkan state has become a tourism hotspot in recent years, although this has primarily been focused on the picturesque Mediterranean coast around Dubrovnik, which gained worldwide renown as the city of King's Landing in TV's *Game of Thrones*. In order to restore a little of the capital's lustre, therefore, Zagreb had been pushing for its premier rally, a fixture since 1974, to join the WRC as a showcase for the city's baroque splendour and the rustic loveliness of the landlocked north of the country.

The route featured stages that bore comparison with the Monte Carlo Rally's Col de Turini, sections of the Tour de Corse and many more classic stages besides, but by far the most pressing concern noted by the crews on recce was gravel and mud being dragged across the road from cutting the corners. The lexicon of motorsport has taken a battering in recent years, although this has largely been confined to circuit racing, where the word 'overtake' has nonsensically transformed from a verb to a noun; passing 'podium' and 'pole' as they travelled in the opposite direction. Now rallying has misguidedly introduced the word 'pollution' to describe muck on the road.

In an era of ever greater eco-sensitivity, using this word in any context can only be viewed as an act of self-harm. In the eyes of its detractors, motorsport is burning fossil fuels for no purpose, yet the WRC community spent all weekend making statements such as: 'There was a lot more pollution than I expected after the cars went through on the first loop'. The optics of our



sport dropped through the floor with every such utterance. Thank goodness, therefore, for the ever-sensible Ott Tanak. "The road is full of shit to be honest," he said.

Road position would therefore be vital, and on the first day it was Toyota's championship leader, Kalle Rovanpera, who stood to gain the most from running first. On the opening 4.3-mile Rude-Plesivica stage, Rovanpera was fastest of all through the first split but, with a little more than half a mile to go, his Yaris WRC ran wide on a downhill right-hander and was pitched

into the trees. It was a brutal accident, but both the young Finn and his co-driver Jonne Halttunen thankfully emerged unhurt.

"I was struggling with the understeer of the car quite much the whole stage," Rovanpera said ruefully. "I just came in and did my braking and tried to go in through the corner, and I lose the car already in the entry of the corner, I never made the proper racing line... A bit too much speed and then understeer and that's the result, so, my mistake."

It was almost a double calamity for Toyota as Ogier skittered just over an inch away from being pitched into those same trees but held on, only to hit a huge stone with the left rear and be obliged to ride on the rim to the finish.

Rovanpera's exit handed the prized first place on the road to the Hyundai of Thierry Neuville, who duly made hay. Three wins on the four stages of the morning loop were the result, showing clearly how far the nascent partnership between Neuville and new co-driver Martijn Wydaeghe has progressed in recent weeks.

All of the frontrunners had taken six tyres with them for the morning loop, most using a mix of four hard and two soft-compound Pirellis or vice versa. Only Tanak's Hyundai went a different route, going for five hard-compound tyres, and this meant he dropped 25 seconds over the four stages as he struggled to get heat into the rubber. This resulted in a breakaway for Neuville,





Evans (right) narrowly lost out to Ogier...

“A bit too much speed and then understeer and that’s the result, so, my mistake”

with Evans in second, 7.3s behind, and Ogier another 5s further back.

Evans was quite content, but Ogier felt that he had misjudged his set-up for the morning run and would be making changes at the service halt. “It’s around the differential... something I haven’t tried in the [pre-event] test,” he said. “I expected, actually, more humidity, and yeah I try to make some change on that back to something I know and I hope to be able to pick up a bit more speed there.”

With his differential tweaked, Ogier duly set three fastest times on the second four-stage loop to leapfrog Evans and close to 7.7s behind Neuville at the overnight halt.

Saturday dawned warm and sunny, and for the Toyotas and the Ford Fiestas of M-Sport this meant bolting on hard-compound tyres. Hyundai elected to send all three cars out with two hard Pirellis and two softs, with another soft as the spare... and the result was catastrophic. Toyota swept to all four stage wins – two for >>

FOURMAUX’S GARDEN PARTY



Friendly Croats give the Frenchman a shove

At long last, the fortitude with which Malcolm Wilson, Rich Millener and the M-Sport team have weathered the storm of the past 12 months was rewarded in Croatia by the emergence of a new star of their own making. On his debut in the WRC’s senior category, Adrien Fourmaux came home fifth behind rallying’s current top four class acts.

In many ways, watching the young Frenchman get to grips with his debut drew parallels with Sebastien Loeb’s second such outing in 2000 on the Sanremo Rally. Back then, the future nine-time world champion took a privateer Toyota Corolla to 10th place among no fewer than 18 works-prepared cars from seven manufacturers. Fourmaux’s fifth position out of nine entries from three manufacturers in Croatia is therefore comparable.

Another important similarity is embroidered upon Fourmaux’s overalls: FFSA, the French sanctioning body for motorsport. Like Loeb and Sebastien Ogier before him, the 25-year-old starred in the French national Rallye Jeunes driver scholarship, winning a launchpad into national competition and claiming five wins from eight starts in 2018.

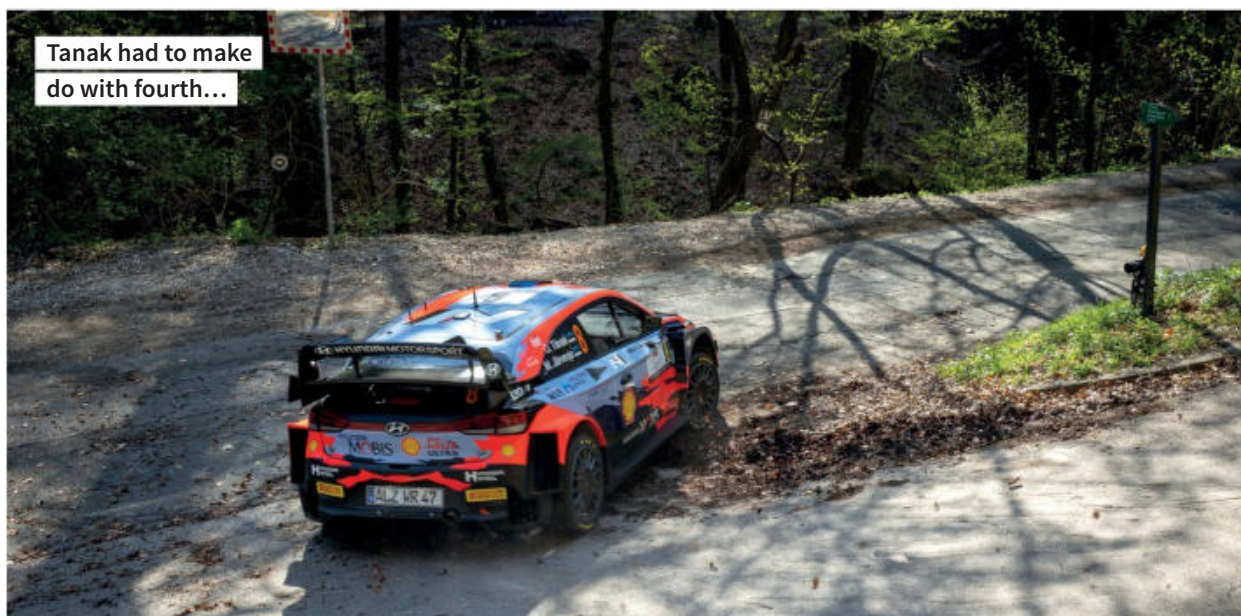
Without a French manufacturer programme, the FFSA then provided a finishing school in Cockermouth, Fourmaux stepping into the international arena with a second place in WRC2 on the 2019 Monte Carlo Rally. Five more WRC2 podiums have followed, plus wins in WRC3 and the European Rally Championship, as the M-Sport team has assiduously broadened his experience. There have been no fireworks. No movies. No heavy PR campaign. Just lots of hard work.

“There’s always a point where you have to let someone have a go in the bigger cars and, you know, Malcolm’s always been keen to try and see when that potentially could be, but we don’t want to rush anything or put too much pressure on anyone too quickly,” Millener said in Croatia. “Four years ago he hadn’t done a rally, so I think if you consider it that way and then you look where you are now, in the main team and second fastest overall [on stages 9 and 13], I think that’s quite a steep learning curve.”

No rally is plain sailing, and the former medical student got away with bouncing his car into someone’s garden on the second stage of the final morning, dropping a minute but not a position. “OK, small mistake... we were actually pretty impressed with how he dealt with that,” said Millener. “Really calm, didn’t rush things, got the car out of there, carried on and was straight back up to speed so overall we’re really happy.”

For M-Sport, it must feel like light at the end of a long tunnel, after the impact of COVID on its business, and setbacks in its flagship programme such as seeing a valuable WRC car burn to the ground in Mexico last year.

For his part, Fourmaux was simply having fun in Croatia, competing on his favoured asphalt surface with no real burden of expectation on him. There will be plenty of tough weekends to come, but this was one to savour. “I’m really, really happy about our weekend,” he said. “Just disappointed for one thing: the rally is finished now! It was just perfect. I can only say thank you to M-Sport and Malcolm and also the FFSA that they still believe. It’s just incredible. Yeah, what a weekend!”



Tanak had to make do with fourth...

Ogier, one for Evans and one for Takamoto Katsuta — while Neuville dropped out of the lead on the first stage of the day, surrendering more than half a minute before the lunchtime service.

The Belgian's tyre woes were compounded by his engine stalling while attempting to use the handbrake, a fault that had previously blighted several rallies for him in 2020, and finally by a broken brake disc. Tyre choice was the biggest problem, however, and both Tanak and the third Hyundai of Craig Breen also dropped time, with Breen picking up a puncture on the first stage.

That same strategic frailty that Hyundai had shown in Monte Carlo this year and in rallies such as Turkey and Monza in 2020 obliged team principal Andrea Adamo to step forward. "From when I'm here, most of the time, when there has been a difficult tyre choice we were able to pick the wrong one," he said. "So it's something in the organisation I set up that doesn't work. I take responsibility for it, and for which I had better move my ass and solve it."

It was clear that in the afternoon, with the sun at its zenith, the hard compound was the only choice to make, and a suitably equipped Neuville began to tear lumps out of Ogier's advantage. Two stage wins fell to

"Most of the time, when there's been a difficult tyre choice we were able to pick the wrong one"

the Hyundai in the afternoon, and Neuville gained an extra 10s when Ogier picked up a puncture on the first stage after service.

Katsuta completed stage wins on both passes through the 13-mile Stojdraga test, but then Neuville's progress was stymied by another unforeseen glitch. "I had an issue with my jack and I couldn't change tyres all afternoon loop, so they were already a bit dead for the last stage," he said, ending his day closer to Evans but 10.4s behind the leader, Ogier.

With 50 stage miles to run on Sunday, there was some prospect of a battle to the finish, although Adamo remained fairly inconsolable. "If you sum up just the afternoon stage times, you have Ogier, Evans and Tanak within two tenths," he said. "And, OK, Thierry a bit faster... I think that when the level of competitiveness is



so high these silly mistakes are the things that will drive the result in the end."

Sunday morning began with drama for Ogier after colliding with a member of the public on his way to the first stage (see *Pit & Paddock*), resulting in a rearranged door that blew dust into co-driver Julien Ingrassia's face and upset the Yaris's aero package. This allowed an on-form Evans to pounce and snatch the lead from his illustrious team-mate after winning both of the first two stages. A colossal effort from Neuville to win the penultimate stage drew scant reward — he took just 0.4s from Evans — before the concluding powerstage got under way.

Neuville's first split time was more than 12s faster than any of the early runners, but then he overshot the final junction and dropped 3s. Ogier survived a huge twitch



Apparently this is 'pollution', according to language-mangling rally folk



that momentarily threatened to send him into a solid-looking house, but ended up faster than Neuville by 1s. At this point Evans seemed destined to hang on for the win, but the Welshman ran wide on the final complex of corners, and thus lost the rally by a scant 0.6s after three days of action.

Ogier was overjoyed. “Of course the emotion for us now is super-strong,” he said. “It’s like it was a crazy rollercoaster for us this weekend between the punctures, the issue this morning obviously, and I was glad to still be in the race honestly and now just to catch this... I guess that’s why we do this sport, for the emotion.”

Ogier therefore added a 51st WRC win on the 18th event he has conquered in his career, as well as breaking the 600 stage wins mark. He put himself back on top of the drivers’ standings with an eight-point cushion over Neuville, while Toyota now holds a chunky 27-point lead in the manufacturers’ points.

Behind the main event, the WRC2 category was won by reigning champion Mads Ostberg’s Citroen in his first outing since last December. The Norwegian’s cause was helped by the exits of current points leader Andreas Mikkelsen in an opening-day shunt and the frontrunning Nikolay Gryazin on the penultimate stage, promoting Teemu Suninen to second.

In WRC3, Kajetan Kajetanowicz took victory in his Skoda from Emil Lindholm and points leader Yoann Rossel, with Britain’s Chris Ingram finishing fifth after rising as high as third. Another Brit, Jon Armstrong, took victory in the opening round of this year’s one-make Junior WRC. 🏆

RESULTS ROUND 3/12, CROATIA RALLY, 22-25 APRIL

POS	DRIVER / CO-DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	Sebastien Ogier (FRA)/ Julien Ingrassia (FRA)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota Yaris WRC	2h51m22.9s
2	Elfyn Evans (GBR)/ Scott Martin (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota Yaris WRC	+0.6s
3	Thierry Neuville (BEL)/ Martijn Wydaeghe (BEL)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+8.1s
4	Ott Tanak (EST)/ Martin Jarveoja (EST)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+1m25.1s
5	Adrien Fourmaux (FRA)/ Renaud Jamoul (BEL)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Fiesta WRC	+3m09.7s
6	Takamoto Katsuta (JPN)/ Daniel Barritt (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota Yaris WRC	+3m31.8s
7	Gus Greensmith (GBR)/ Chris Patterson (GBR)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Fiesta WRC	+3m58.8s
8	Craig Breen (IRL)/ Paul Nagle (IRL)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+4m28.2s
9	Mads Ostberg (NOR)/ Torstein Eriksen (NOR)	TRT World Rally Team / Citroen C3 Rally2	+10m00.8s
10	Teemu Suninen (FIN)/ Mikko Markkula (FIN)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Fiesta Rally2	+10m29.3s

OTHERS

29	Pierre-Louis Loubet (FRA)/ Vincent Landais (FRA)	Hyundai 2C Competition / Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+33m19.9s
R	Kalle Rovanpera (FIN)/ Jonne Halttunen (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota Yaris WRC	SS1-accident

STAGE TIMES

STAGE	FASTEST	LEADER	SECOND
SS1 Rude-Plesivica 1 (4.31 miles)	Neuville 4m24.2s	Neuville	Tanak +2.1s
SS2 Kostanjevac-Petrus Vrh 1 (14.76 miles)	Neuville 12m58.6s	Neuville	Evans +7.7s
SS3 Jaskovo-Mali Modrus Potok 1 (6.28 miles)	Ogier and Evans 5m32.3s	Neuville	Evans +6.8s
SS4 Pecurkovo Brdo-Mreznicki Novaki 1 (5.66 miles)	Neuville 4m51.9s	Neuville	Evans +7.3s
SS5 Rude-Plesivica 2 (4.31 miles)	Tanak 4m30.4s	Neuville	Evans +8.4s
SS6 Kostanjevac-Petrus Vrh 2 (14.76 miles)	Ogier 12m55.8s	Neuville	Evans +5.2s
SS7 Jaskovo-Mali Modrus Potok 2 (6.28 miles)	Ogier 5m26.7s	Neuville	Evans +7.7s
SS8 Pecurkovo Brdo-Mreznicki Novaki 2 (5.66 miles)	Ogier 4m49.8s	Neuville	Ogier +7.7s
SS9 Mali Lipovec-Grdanjci 1 (12.61 miles)	Ogier 12m26.1s	Ogier	Evans +3.1s
SS10 Stojdraga-Gornja Vas 1 (12.91 miles)	Katsuta 12m36.9s	Ogier	Evans +5.4s
SS11 Krasic-Vrskovac 1 (6.90 miles)	Evans 5m36.8s	Ogier	Evans +4.1s
SS12 Vinski Vrh-Duga Resa 1 (5.46 miles)	Ogier 4m37.6s	Ogier	Evans +7.0s
SS13 Mali Lipovec-Grdanjci 2 (12.61 miles)	Neuville 12m31.9s	Ogier	Evans +6.9s
SS14 Stojdraga-Gornja Vas 2 (12.91 miles)	Katsuta 12m36.1s	Ogier	Evans +5.5s
SS15 Krasic-Vrskovac 2 (6.90 miles)	Ogier and Neuville 5m32.1s	Ogier	Evans +6.5s
SS16 Vinski Vrh-Duga Resa 2 (5.46 miles)	Ogier 4m36.6s	Ogier	Evans +6.9s
SS17 Bliznec-Pila 1 (15.66 miles)	Evans 14m04.5s	Ogier	Evans +4.2s
SS18 Zagorska Sela-Kumrovec 1 (8.76 miles)	Evans 8m18.4s	Evans	Ogier +2.8s
SS19 Bliznec-Pila 2 (15.66 miles)	Neuville 13m59.0s	Evans	Ogier +3.9s
SS20 Zagorska Sela-Kumrovec 2 (powerstage) (8.76 miles)	Ogier 8m14.0s	Ogier	Evans +0.6s

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 **Ogier** 61; 2 **Neuville** 53; 3 **Evans** 51; 4 **Tanak** 40; 5 **Rovanpera** 39; 6 **Breen** 24; 7 **Katsuta** 24; 8 **Fourmaux** 12; 9 **Greensmith** 12; 10 **Sordo** 11.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 **Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT** 138; 2 **Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT** 111; 3 **M-Sport Ford WRT** 42; 4 **Hyundai 2C Competition** 28.



NEXT EVENT

RALLY PORTUGAL 27 MAY ISSUE

Tanak won last time the rallying elite fought it out here in 2019, but that was in his Toyota days. He needs a good run soon in his Hyundai title attack.



De Vries led for just one lap of a dramatic first race, but it was the crucial one

DE VRIES LUCKY OR CLEVER AMID THE CHAOS?

Mercedes driver Nyck de Vries took a dramatic late victory in Spain, but many were unsure that it was the sort of spectacle Formula E needs

MATT KEW

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**



Formula E has now endured its 2005 United States Grand Prix moment. That was the comparison doing the rounds in the Circuit Ricardo Tormo's paddock last weekend. An avoidable image problem had been created and none out of the championship, the motorsport governing body or the teams, came up smelling of roses.

A track littered with slowing and stopped cars on the final lap of the Valencia E-Prix opener as motors and invertors supped the last dregs of usable energy meant the Saturday race descended into farce. It did absolutely no favours for the public perception of electric vehicles. More controversy then arose when these scenes were unconvincingly defended, and the reigning champion was hung out to dry to leave officials looking more than a touch red-faced.

Antonio Felix da Costa was a little fortunate to line up on pole. Mercedes driver Stoffel Vandoorne topped qualifying over his DS Techeetah rival by 0.028 seconds, but was marched to the back of the grid when a barcode on one of his all-weather Michelin tyres didn't match the serial number declared pre-event in the car's so-called 'technical passport'. Silver Arrows team principal Ian James put it down to a "fat finger moment" when the '8' key was pressed instead of '7'.

Moist asphalt meant the grid was led away by the safety car, allowing da Costa to maintain the lead before stretching out an advantage of nearly 4s in between a flurry of interruptions as drivers beached themselves in the gravel. These incidents and retirements helped negate a five-place grid penalty for Nyck de Vries (who thus started seventh), carried over from Rome after shunting with Sam Bird, boosting the Mercedes driver to second place. And he would pounce on da Costa to snatch the victory after the final of five safety cars turned the race on its head.

Green-flag conditions returned for a two-lap sprint to the line, teeing up a climax to be relished to an already entertaining contest. Instead, it plunged the race into disrepute when da Costa and 10 others slowed to a crawl to stand any chance of reaching the finish as they ran out of juice.

In the end, just nine of the 24 drivers were classified. Of those, three had thumbed the pit-limiter button and effectively coasted home, with Jean-Eric Vergne clocking a 5m48s lap. A further three drivers stopped altogether on track, while five more were disqualified for exceeding permitted energy levels.

An excluded da Costa explained the damage that had been done to Formula E's reputation: "I've gone from being all good and >>



STALEY



thinking I might win this race to I am not coming home tonight. It's not the image we want to pass. We will be the joke of the week, I guess. It's not a good day for us. I feel sorry for the fans."

The problem boiled down to the application of discretion. An amendment to the regulations voted in at the June 2019 meeting of the FIA World Motor Sport Council means that for each minute spent under full-course yellow or safety car conditions, 1kWh can be deducted from the 52kWh race total of usable energy that each driver can legally deploy. But this isn't a hard and fast rule, meaning race director Scot Elkins, who leads the calls on when and how to impose a reduction, is able to change it on the fly.

A not insignificant 19m33s was spent in formation behind the Mini Electric 'Pacesetter' safety car. For the final intervention, which came courtesy of Andre Lotterer sending his Porsche with its ailing brakes up the inside of Edoardo Mortara at Turn 1 to force the pair into the gravel, there was a final 5kWh energy slash to take the sum subtraction to 19kWh.

These reductions were particularly pertinent for Formula E's debut on a permanent circuit. Higher average speeds and the absence of the usual big stops into 90-degree turns meant that energy was always going to be marginal. The reason why a much-maligned temporary chicane made its way onto the Valencia layout



Energy reductions during safety car periods proved very controversial

SBLOXHAM

Da Costa led nearly all the way and was not pleased to be used as a scapegoat



Muller was 15th at the final restart but ended up with second place

was to offer an additional heavy braking zone to allow drivers to stamp on the anchors and harvest more energy.

But with the final 5kWh cut, and with only two racing laps remaining after the safety car peeled into the pits, there wasn't sufficient opportunity for drivers to regain the energy taken away by the in-race amendments in what was reported to Autosport as an "impossible final target".

Adding confusion, the cars weren't completely spent per se. The 52kWh race total is easily within the capabilities of the standardised McLaren Applied battery. They had the charge, around 40%, going spare to easily reach the flag, but drivers had hit the buffer of what the FIA legally permitted them to consume.

What was required in the moments after the controversial close was deft communication. Instead, Formula E issued this baffling official statement to media: "Energy management is key in Formula E. The race today shows the skill and strategy needed to combine speed and energy management."

In essence, they blamed those drivers and teams who didn't make the finish, and opened the floodgates for range anxiety-based battery criticism. Also consider that this was only half of the original draft. Thankfully, sense fought back and damage was limited after the second part, which tried to justify events as proving Formula E as a rolling laboratory for road car development, was retracted.

Matters weren't eased by the FIA, whose defence was fronted by Formula E director Frederic Bertrand. In his thankless task of facing the media, he made more than a passing reference to erstwhile race leader da Costa. He reckoned the Portuguese could have slowed the pack more at the final safety car restart, and let the 45-minute race timer tick down from 15s to zero, to create >>

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GALLOWAY

a one-lap sprint, rather than the two.

Bertrand said: “For sure, it was surprising that this choice was done this way [by da Costa] to have that extra lap. It was clearly making life difficult to a lot of drivers and the leader in particular. When you look at all the circumstances and the way this happened, it’s a very tricky race. At the end there is in a few seconds something which happens, which maybe is not the right decision at the end.”

Da Costa was having none of it, and nor were his defenders, who felt the 2019-20 champion had been thrown under the bus in these comments. His very public reply on social media was: “I’m sorry, but I can’t accept this. If I go even slower under [the safety car], how many teams would have protested me at the end? And also, if I go slower, they would have reduced more energy. Today it was only on the hands of the FIA to save all of us from this.”

But what of de Vries, who inherited a second win of the season, runner-up Nico Muller and Vandoorne (who progressed from last to the podium)? As Bertrand said, “as we have seen today, there are some who have been able to have success”.

They did indeed make it to the finish at something close to race speed with their energy levels intact. But, as with his commanding victory in Saudi Arabia earlier this year, de Vries was again underconsuming for much of the race and had energy to burn over his rivals. Muller, who started 22nd, was lumped with a drivethrough penalty early on for overpower usage. Vandoorne was entering a race where he and the Mercedes team expected very little reward. He was also hit with a 5s penalty for forcing Dragon Penske Autosport racer Muller off track.



GALLOWAY

With these reprimands, as one person put it to Autosport, their race strategy then turned into “betting it all on black”. They were forced into salvage missions and had little else to do but save energy from very early on. Arguably it was more luck than judgement that meant events turned out in their favour and they scored unlikely changes in fortune. They were the exceptions rather than indicators that everyone could have feasibly made it to the end.

Energy reductions under the safety car has been an ongoing topic. Last time out in Rome, the reason why Bird and de Vries collided as they battled on the fringes of the top 10 was because the Jaguar Racing driver had been given patchy information regarding his remaining energy due to earlier incidents in the race. The issue was then brought up in the Friday meeting of team managers in Spain, where it was decided not to tweak the format.

Bertrand reckoned his competitors slowing to a crawl and being disqualified on the final lap was “part of the show”. He said: “People understand all the challenges this championship has. It’s not only driving; it’s not only managing your race as normal, but it’s also managing all these aspects of energy management. Let’s keep it as a challenge for the championship.”

“Let’s keep these types of aspects of the championship high so that people understand how difficult it is to win here for a team, for a driver. To be consistent on the season is also very difficult. We prefer to have a high fight level up to the last minute and the last metres. But still, that’s part of the Formula E challenge, managing energy. We can’t avoid that.”

Yet he also said: “This is clearly not the way we like it. We don’t think it’s the type of end of race we would like to have every weekend. Once was clearly enough, and I hope everybody learned and it will never happen again.”

This controversial end to the wet race, which had the early hallmarks of a thriller, was not the result of a perfect storm. That implies too much was down to bad luck, coincidence and was ultimately out of people’s hands. But events in Valencia were avoidable in the first instance, and not explained and justified better in the second.

Championship ever-present Lucas di Grassi described events as “an outlier that happened once every 1000 races”. For Formula E, it came at just the 74th time of asking. This series has its own commercial issues playing out in the background, but through events in Spain and crashes in Rome, its sporting credentials have now taken a sizeable dose of flak in recent weeks as well. It’s not been a good look for a first season under FIA World Championship status. ❧

DENNIS DEFIES THE ODDS

A second race at the Circuit Ricardo Tormo could have ended in very similar fashion to the first, with half the field trundling around. Fortunately, that was avoided as BMW Andretti concluded an improvised strategy masterclass to help electric rookie Jake Dennis to a maiden victory.

The runaway polesitter, 1.2s quicker in qualifying than any of his peers thanks to drying track conditions, was never passed on his way to the spoils as the race grew into the processional slipstreaming affair that had been expected of the opener.

A premeditated team call was made for Dennis to drop behind second-starting Alex Lynn, but the Mahindra Racing driver set off even slower to ensure he could stay in the tow and save energy. And almost everyone else did likewise. That left Dennis to be the “guinea pig”.

“The plan was always to let Alex pass, but then it was quite evident he didn’t want to,” said former McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner Dennis. “We had to change it up. He basically just followed every move I did. It was just a game of poker really.”

Although Lynn was spun out of contention by Norman Nato, it took nothing away from how well Dennis managed energy and speed. As instructed by the team, he then checked his pace to cross the line less than a second after the race timer had ticked to zero, meaning he only had to complete one more lap, which he nailed.

With victory, Dennis announced himself in Formula E after a torrid start to the term for BMW Andretti, which had arrived in Spain last in the teams’ standings.

Walking with a newfound swagger past the garages, Dennis said: “It’s just a massive relief that we’ve got our first win. Every driver is shocked I led from lap one to lap 30. Nobody thought it was possible.”

And with Dennis contracted to BMW, not the Andretti race team, it does his future no harm with the manufacturer set to quit Formula E at the end of the season.



RESULTS ROUND 3/8, VALENCIA (ESP), 24-25 APRIL RACE 1 (24 LAPS – 50.346 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Nyck de Vries (NLD)	Mercedes / Mercedes EQ Silver Arrow 02	48m20.547s
2	Nico Muller (CHE)	Dragon Penske Autosport / Penske EV-4	+13.128s
3	Stoffel Vandoorne (BEL)	Mercedes / Mercedes EQ Silver Arrow 02	+34.886s
4	Nick Cassidy (NZL)	Envision Virgin Racing / Audi e-tron FE07	+36.903s
5	Rene Rast (DEU)	Audi / Audi e-tron FE07	+51.650s
6	Robin Frijns (NLD)	Envision Virgin Racing / Audi e-tron FE07	+52.985s
7	Lucas di Grassi (BRA)	Audi / Audi e-tron FE07	+2m41.946s
8	Jake Dennis (GBR)	BMW Andretti / BMW iFE.21	+3m07.061s
9	Jean-Eric Vergne (FRA)	DS Techeetah / DS E-Tense FE21	+4m19.582s
EX	Oliver Rowland (GBR)	Nissan e.dams / Nissan IM02	+2.104s-exceeded energy limit
EX	Alexander Sims (GBR)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M7Electro	+13.069s-exceeded energy limit
EX	Antonio Felix da Costa (PRT)	DS Techeetah / DS E-Tense FE21	+1m09.538s-exceeded energy limit
EX	Alex Lynn (GBR)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M7Electro	+1m33.405s-exceeded energy limit
EX	Sam Bird (GBR)	Jaguar Racing / Jaguar I-TYPE 5	+1m36.009s-exceeded energy limit
NC	Oliver Turvey (GBR)	NIO 333 / NIO 333 001	+1m58.342s-out of energy
NC	Tom Blomqvist (GBR)	NIO 333 / NIO 333 001	+2m01.290s-out of energy
NC	Norman Nato (FRA)	Venturi Racing / Mercedes EQ Silver Arrow 02	23 laps-out of energy
R	Edoardo Mortara (ITA)	Venturi Racing / Mercedes EQ Silver Arrow 02	20 laps-accident
R	Pascal Wehrlein (DEU)	Porsche / Porsche 99X Electric	19 laps-brakes
R	Andre Lotterer (DEU)	Porsche / Porsche 99X Electric	19 laps-accident
R	Mitch Evans (NZL)	Jaguar Racing / Jaguar I-TYPE 5	15 laps-accident
R	Sergio Sette Camara (BRA)	Dragon Penske Autosport / Penske EV-4	14 laps-accident
R	Maximilian Guenther (DEU)	BMW Andretti / BMW iFE.21	10 laps-accident
R	Sebastien Buemi (CHE)	Nissan e.dams / Nissan IM02	1 lap-beached

Winner's average speed 62.486mph. **Fastest lap** Frijns 1m39.611s, 75.813mph.

SUPERPOLE 1 da Costa 1m26.522s; 2 Guenther 1m26.943s; 3 Lynn 1m27.022s; 4 Buemi 1m27.053s; 7 de Vries 1m26.730s*; 24 Vandoorne time deleted for technical infringement, forced to start from back.

* Started seventh following five-place penalty for causing a collision in previous round.

QUALIFYING Lynn 1m26.799s; Vandoorne 1m26.839s; Guenther 1m26.868s; da Costa 1m26.870s; Buemi 1m26.876s; de Vries 1m26.914s; 5 Lotterer 1m26.933s; 6 Nato 1m26.979s; 8 Rowland 1m27.002s; 9 Wehrlein 1m27.008s; 10 Cassidy 1m27.072s; 11 Sims 1m27.109s; 12 Vergne 1m27.157s; 13 Dennis 1m27.177s; 14 Rast 1m27.290s; 15 Frijns 1m27.317s; 16 Mortara 1m27.338s; 17 Evans 1m27.442s; 18 Sette Camara 1m27.456s; 19 Blomqvist 1m27.481s; 20 Bird 1m27.619s; 21 di Grassi 1m27.634s; 22 Muller 1m27.644s; 23 Turvey 1m28.524s.

RACE 2 (30 LAPS – 62.932 MILES)

1 Dennis 46m32.002s; 2 Lotterer +1.483s; 3 Lynn +2.428s; 4 Rowland +2.870s; 5 Nato +5.811s; 6 Rast +8.122s; 7 Vergne +8.782s; 8 Turvey +11.292s; 9 Mortara +12.014s; 10 di Grassi +12.405s; 11 Buemi +13.295s; 12 Guenther +13.594s; 13 Cassidy +14.329s; 14 Bird +15.151s; 15 Evans +17.213s; 16 de Vries +18.444s; 17 Blomqvist +18.885s; 18 Wehrlein +19.274s; 19 Frijns +19.756s; 20 Muller +21.069s; 21 Sette Camara +32.079s; 22 da Costa +59.698s; 23 Sims +1m04.277s; R Vandoorne 20 laps-accident damage/suspension.

Winner's average speed 81.144mph. **Fastest lap** Sims 1m30.081s, 83.834mph.

SUPERPOLE 1 Dennis 1m28.548s; 2 Lynn 1m29.737s; 3 Blomqvist 1m30.202s; 4 Turvey 1m30.403s; 5 Lotterer 1m29.411s*; 6 Nato 1m30.489s. * Started fifth following three-place penalty for causing a collision in race one.

QUALIFYING Dennis 1m31.855s; Lotterer 1m31.958s; Lynn 1m32.585s; Blomqvist 1m32.727s; Turvey 1m32.950s; Nato 1m33.155s; 7 Vergne 1m33.198s; 8 Rowland 1m33.336s; 9 Buemi 1m33.390s; 10 Sette Camara 1m33.452s; 11 Sims 1m33.479s; 12 da Costa 1m33.604s; 13 Wehrlein 1m33.745s; 14 Rast 1m33.879s; 15 Mortara 1m33.898s; 16 Frijns 1m34.166s; 17 Vandoorne 1m34.416s; 18 de Vries 1m34.419s; 19 Evans 1m34.115s*; 20 Bird 1m34.480s; 21 Muller 1m34.588s; 22 di Grassi 1m34.610s; 23 Cassidy 1m37.838s; 24 Guenther 1m41.980s.

* Started 19th following three-place penalty for causing a collision in race one.

CHAMPIONSHIP 1 de Vries 57; 2 Vandoorne 48; 3 Bird 43; 4 Frijns 43; 5 Evans 39; 6 Rast 39; 7 Vergne 33; 8 Dennis 33; 9 Mortara 32; 10 Wehrlein 32.

NEXT RACE

MONACO E-PRIX 13 MAY ISSUE

Will things calm down as the field heads to Monaco? We doubt it!



Herta's rare glimpse of perfection

The young Andretti Autosport star was on his 'A' game and then some, taking pole position at St Petersburg by a quarter of a second, then leading all but three laps of the race

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport**
IMAGES

Every now and then in IndyCar, a driver, car and team's strategy and pitstops are so close to perfection that the combination is unbeatable, and leaves the majority of opponents with no answers. Last year that happened with Scott Dixon at Texas Motor Speedway and Will Power in Mid-Ohio race one. In 2019 there was similar dominance from Alexander Rossi at Long Beach and from rookie Colton Herta at Laguna Seca.

And now Herta's done it again. Last weekend, the #26 Andretti Autosport Dallara-Honda took pole by a quarter of a second, and then led 97 of the 100 laps of the 1.8-mile street/runway course at St Petersburg to score his fourth career victory.

He's 21, he's matched the victory tally of his father Bryan who this year has become his strategist, and he's a title contender.

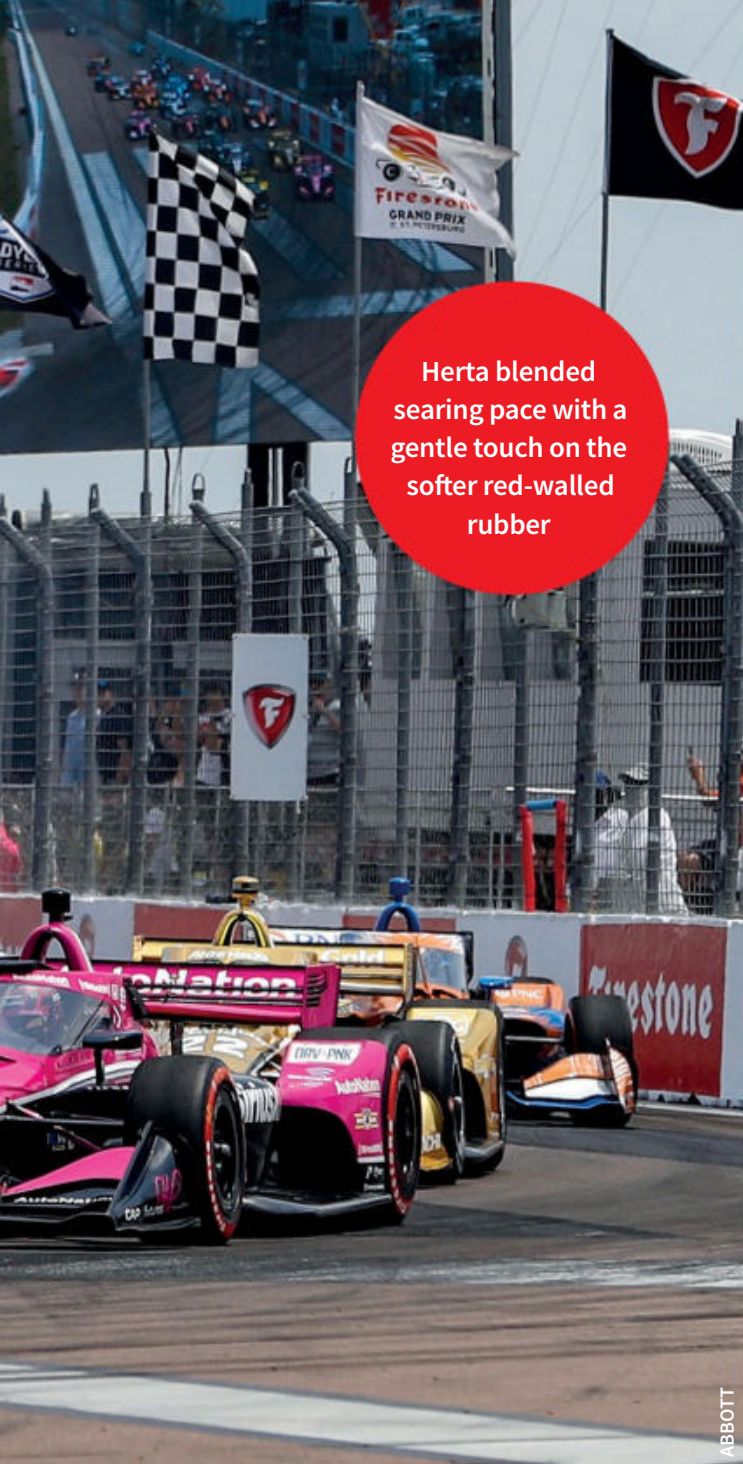
Herta Jr was wiped out in Josef Newgarden's lap-one carnage at Barber Motorsports Park the previous week, but last Sunday Herta held off that same Team Penske driver, who afterwards described him as Andretti Autosport's "top gun" and one of Penske's biggest threats.

This wasn't news to anyone, for Herta performed phenomenally well in 2020, his sophomore season, scored Andretti Autosport's only victory, subdued (almost) all his rookie excesses, and wound up third in the final points standings. This year, he can realistically expect to arrive at the season finale — this year it's the

delayed Grand Prix of Long Beach — fighting for the title.

On learning of Newgarden's compliment, Herta looked coy, but is too honest to deny the two-time champion's assessment. "It's good to hear, it's good to know that they're thinking about us," he said. "I definitely feel like we are championship challengers. Obviously we had a bumpy first round, but that's not to say that the rest of the 15 other races for this year aren't going to be spectacular for us.

"The field is deep, I've said it before, but I expect guys to have rough, rough weekends and just not be competitive at some points. We're seeing a year where champions are struggling to qualify in the top 10 at some points. It's really such a competitive year,



Herta blended searing pace with a gentle touch on the softer red-walled rubber



It's win number four for Herta – the same as dad Bryan

and you really need to be on your 'A' game, because like we saw in qualifying here, you give up half of a tenth, and that's going to be enough to knock you out and move you down two or three places..."

The picture was especially jumbled at St Pete (see page 50) due to confusion over the performance of the Firestone tyres, but Herta and race engineer Nathan O'Rourke spent the two 45-minute practice sessions assessing the strengths of the car. In FP2, when everyone is allowed to try a set of Firestone's softer compound alternate rubber (the red-sidewalled tyres), they discovered that Herta, unlike much of his principal opposition, could turn the tyres on in time to be extremely quick on his first flyer, but then keep getting faster. Hence that devastatingly quick pole lap on worn reds in the Fast Six shootout.

His and the car's gentle treatment of the softer tyre was also crucial to Herta maintaining his advantage in the first stint of the race. He and fellow front-row starter Jack Harvey of Meyer Shank Racing, a semi team-mate given the technical partnership between Andretti and MSR, both started on the reds, but Herta swiftly pulled out a 2.5s gap on the Briton, and then maintained it while hitting the required fuel numbers for a two-pitstop strategy, and looking after his tyres.

That's a tricky equation, and normally the veteran aces such as Dixon and Power do it best, but it's very car-dependent. To save fuel requires the driver to come off the

throttle sooner at the end of a straight but make up for this by carrying that much more off-throttle rolling speed through the corners, which in turn demands that the tyres soak up a lot of lateral load. In those circumstances, less than optimal handling will: 1) kill the driver's confidence of pitching in at the limit of adhesion without touching the throttle to help alter trajectory; and 2) prove tough on tyres.

"Yeah, that's the difficult thing about saving fuel on the red tyres," confirmed Herta. "Obviously you're lifting [off the throttle] so you're braking later, you're braking a little bit harder, which means you're more susceptible to rear locking, which absolutely destroys the tyres. Plus you're trying to carry that speed through the corners more to make up for lifting early on. So you're using a lot more of the tyre.

"I think we just had the perfect balance. In normal places you would want a little bit of oversteer – that's the best way to save fuel and go fast. But for here I thought it was going to be understeer, especially for that first stint on the new reds to get them to the end. It ended up being the right decision with the way that we went, because I was just able to thrash on the front tyres and not even worry about the rear tyres. It made it a lot easier for me."

Harvey could not juggle this equation nearly so well, and ceded second to the primary-tyred Team Penske car of Newgarden on lap 31. Over the next three laps, Newgarden halved the 4s deficit to

"We're seeing a year where champions are struggling to qualify in the top 10 at some points"

Herta, but then they both pitted at the end of lap 35 for scrubbed primary tyres, and at this point Herta showed his advantage over the driver who had won the previous two St Petersburg races. By the time they stopped again on lap 68, Herta's lead was out to 11s.

This was nullified five laps into the final stint when NASCAR legend and IndyCar rookie Jimmie Johnson caused his second caution of the day by spinning exiting Turn 3, the notoriously difficult, bumpy and rubber marble-strewn right-hander that has caught out many a veteran in the past. He got going again unassisted, but not before the full-course caution had been thrown.

Now came a new challenge for Herta; he was on primary rubber, Newgarden was on the alternate compound, which generally comes up to operating temperature a little quicker. But Herta kept his head and kept the lead.

Four laps later came the third caution of the day, as Ed Jones's Dale Coyne Racing with Vasser-Sullivan entry collided with the lapped Andretti Autosport machine >>

of James Hinchcliffe. The Canadian had collected a puncture in the first quarter of the race after a failed attempt to squeeze Takuma Sato's Rahal Letterman Lanigan car had resulted in a coming together that punctured his front-right tyre.

On the final restart on lap 83, Herta discovered that Newgarden could stay closer to him for longer. Indeed, it took

“Maybe once or twice a year you have a car that’s dominant. It does exactly what you want it to do”

a dozen laps for Herta to eke his advantage beyond the 1.5s barrier, as the Penske driver's reds started to fade.

“I think [the two compounds] were more equal than we have seen in the past,” mused Herta, “because on the first restart [during the first stint] I was on reds, he was on blacks, and he was able to stay really close. And on the restarts when I was on blacks, I felt the tyres come up to temp really quick... Obviously we saw Josef was really fast on the red tyres early on, and then we kind of saw that crossover point where I was able to start pulling out some good laps and his tyres were starting to fall off.”

Job done, Herta crossed the line after 100 laps 2.5s ahead of Newgarden.

Almost four seconds further back was Penske's Simon Pagenaud, who had made a rare appearance in the Fast Six in



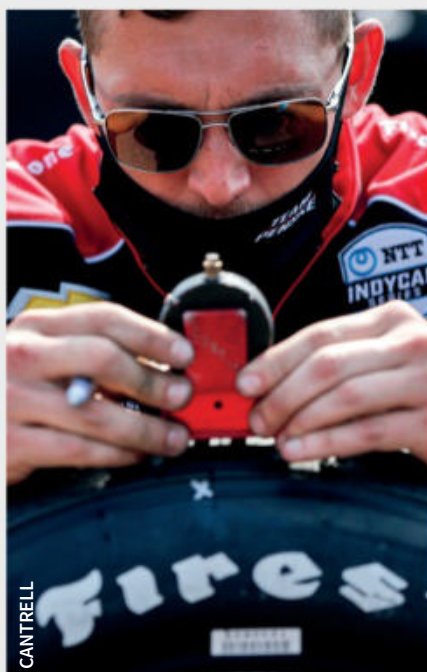
qualifying for a road/street track and wasn't about to throw it away with a rash move. One of his other team-mates, Power, a nine-time polesitter at this venue, had a nightmarishly bad qualifying session — from second quickest on Friday, he found his car was understeering badly come Saturday and, while wrestling with it in Q1, he bent a toelink against a wall, resulting in a spin and a 20th-place starting spot. Then the first spin for Johnson allowed the #12 Power team to convert to a three-stop strategy and,

running two sets of reds, he carved through the field to claim eighth. His rookie team-mate Scott McLaughlin started 14th and finished 11th, when a planned alternate strategy couldn't come to fruition.

Harvey held on to finish fourth, his best result in more than a season, while Dixon came home fifth to lead the Chip Ganassi Racing attack, ahead of Sato and the second CGR machine of Marcus Ericsson.

Notable absentees from the sharp end of the field included Rossi and Graham Rahal, who collided on lap 36 as Rahal on

A CRUCIAL TYRE CONUNDRUM



Two years ago at Barber Motorsports Park, the majority of IndyCar's traditional frontrunners were thrown into paroxysms of bafflement in qualifying when Firestone brought a batch of softer alternate-compound tyres that had gone unused in 2018 due to that race being a wet event. The theory was that over the intervening months the rubber had cured and hardened, and suddenly the gap in performance between reds and blacks had markedly narrowed. Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing got its head around the issue and Takuma Sato dominated the race.

Did something similar happen

last weekend in St Petersburg?

Certainly that was a theory from some drivers, although they were not prepared to allow their quotes to be attributed. A couple of the stars felt their car's balance shift from one red compound to another, which is normally something that only happens when changing from primaries to alternates.

Of course, if you were Colton Herta, your car worked superbly on either compound, but another ace described it as a lottery as to whether you got a 'good' or 'bad' set, which was the crucial difference from Barber in 2019, when “all the reds were as bad as each other”.

Firestone Racing's Cara Adams rejected this criticism: “None of the tyres are outdated. The alternate tyres – as well as the primary tyres – were all made at the same time. There is no lottery for tyre distribution. All drivers get the same tyres to ensure consistency.”

The Stadium Super Trucks on the support bill may have literally and figuratively muddled the situation by dragging foreign matter onto the track surface whenever they cut corners. Whatever, the result was a great deal of uncertainty, as demonstrated by the near equal spread of cars starting the race on reds (13) and blacks (11).



ABBOTT

warm tyres attempted to make a pass for what would likely have been fourth place by the end of the race.

Two of the stars of Barber Motorsports Park, polesitter Pato O'Ward (Arrow McLaren SP) and race winner Alex Palou (Ganassi), endured quite anonymous races. O'Ward, who had qualified sixth, fell back from the drop of the green flag, but should still have finished in the top half of the field. But the Mexican was collected in the Jones/Hinchcliffe collision, and he had to make a late stop for a new front wing.

Palou set the fastest lap of the race, so clearly had potential, but an unspecified tyre problem — he claims he didn't hit anything nor was he hit by anyone — meant he crawled pitward with a lap to go and stayed there.

Everyone other than Newgarden had been a bit-part player, though, when compared with the mighty Herta. "You know, a few times — maybe once or twice a year — you have a car that is dominant, where no matter what you're doing, it just does exactly what you want it to do," he said. "You could be saving as much fuel as you want or going as hard as you want and it just produces the killer lap times.

"We had one of those days, and it was awesome." 🏆

NEXT REPORT

TEXAS 6 MAY ISSUE

Can anyone duplicate Herta's form in the first IndyCar double-header of 2021?



Pagenaud shone in qualifying, then took final podium place

GALSTAD

RESULTS ROUND 2/15, ST PETERSBURG (USA), 25 APRIL (100 LAPS – 180.000 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Colton Herta (USA)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	1h51m51.4115s
2	Josef Newgarden (USA)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+2.4933s
3	Simon Pagenaud (FRA)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+6.1496s
4	Jack Harvey (GBR)	Meyer Shank Racing / Dallara-Honda	+8.0833s
5	Scott Dixon (NZL)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+8.9497s
6	Takuma Sato (JPN)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+11.6802s
7	Marcus Ericsson (SWE)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+11.9393s
8	Will Power (AUS)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+13.2363s
9	Rinus van Kalmthout (NLD)	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+13.7194s
10	Sebastien Bourdais (FRA)	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	+15.9951s
11	Scott McLaughlin (NZL)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+17.5926s
12	Felix Rosenqvist (SWE)	Arrow McLaren SP / Dallara-Chevrolet	+18.5638s
13	Romain Grosjean (FRA)	Dale Coyne Racing with RWR / Dallara-Honda	+22.7276s
14	Ryan Hunter-Reay (USA)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	+24.1275s
15	Graham Rahal (USA)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+24.7928s
16	Conor Daly (USA)	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+48.1603s
17	Alex Palou (ESP)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	99 laps-tyres
18	James Hinchcliffe (CAN)	Andretti Steinbrenner Autosport / Dallara-Honda	-1 lap
19	Patricio O'Ward (MEX)	Arrow McLaren SP / Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap
20	Ed Jones (ARE)	Dale Coyne Racing with Vasser Sullivan / Dallara-Honda	-1 lap
21	Alexander Rossi (USA)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	-2 laps
22	Jimmie Johnson (USA)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	-5 laps
23	Dalton Kellett (CAN)	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	67 laps-spun off
24	Max Chilton (GBR)	Carlin / Dallara-Chevrolet	18 laps-gearbox

Winner's average speed 96.552mph. **Fastest lap** Palou 1m01.4568s, 105.440mph.

Q3 1 Herta 1m00.3210s; 2 Harvey 1m00.5709s; 3 Newgarden 1m00.6078s; 4 Pagenaud 1m00.6353s; 5 Bourdais 1m01.0017s; 6 O'Ward 1m01.0799s.

Q2 Herta 1m00.2207s; Newgarden 1m00.3428s; Bourdais 1m00.3573s; O'Ward 1m00.3999s; Harvey 1m00.4262s; Pagenaud 1m00.4385s; 7 van Kalmthout 1m00.4858s; 8 Dixon 1m00.4997s; 9 Rahal 1m00.5678s; 10 Palou 1m00.6220s; 11 Rossi 1m00.6476s; 12 Hinchcliffe 1m00.8671s.

Q1 – GROUP 1 Rossi 1m00.2949s; Herta 1m00.3659s; O'Ward 1m00.6026s; Pagenaud 1m00.6375s; Bourdais 1m00.7182s; Dixon 1m00.7921s;

13 Hunter-Reay 1m00.8524s; 15 Sato 1m00.9167s; 17 Rosenqvist 1m00.9569s; 19 Daly 1m01.4220s; 21 Jones 1m01.4453s; 23 Johnson 1m01.8364s.

Q1 – GROUP 2 Newgarden 1m00.4437s; Rahal 1m00.4825s; Harvey 1m00.5028s; van Kalmthout 1m00.5414s; Hinchcliffe 1m00.6368s; Palou 1m00.6521s; 14 McLaughlin 1m00.7044s; 16 Ericsson 1m00.7058s; 18 Grosjean 1m00.8127s; 20 Power 1m01.1140s; 22 Chilton 1m01.5065s; 24 Kellett 1m02.3396s.

CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Palou 67; 2 Power 65; 3 Dixon 65; 4 Herta 62; 5 Pagenaud 54; 6 Harvey 51; 7 Bourdais 51; 8 van Kalmthout 51; 9 Ericsson 50; 10 Newgarden 47.

Poleman
Fukuzumi leads
Nojiri on the run to
the first turn

Nojiri profits from tyre blowout for Fukuzumi

SUPER FORMULA
SUZUKA (JPN)
25 APRIL
ROUND 2/7

Tomoki Nojiri made it back-to-back Super Formula victories in last weekend's second round at Suzuka. The Team Mugen driver took advantage of a puncture for poleman Nirei Fukuzumi, who had dominated the weekend up to that point, and in the early stages was looking on course for his first win in the series.

That was until lap nine of 30, when the right-rear tyre of Fukuzumi's Dandelion Racing Dallara-Honda let go in spectacular style exiting Spoon Curve and approaching 130R. That allowed fellow Honda man Nojiri into a lead he would maintain to the finish, barring a brief spell during the pitstops.

After a safety car period triggered by a crash at 130R for Yuji Kunimoto, Nojiri comfortably held off nearest challenger Ryo Hirakawa for his fifth career win, and his third in the last six races. It means that

Nojiri, the first back-to-back race winner in Super Formula for three years, extends his lead in the standings over Team Impul driver Hirakawa to 22 points.

Hirakawa nonetheless could be satisfied with a first podium since last year's Sugo round, and with again finishing as the best Toyota-engined runner.

Ukyo Sasahara scored a career-best third in the remaining Dandelion car on his second appearance standing in for the unwell Tadasuke Makino. Sasahara headed home Yuhi Sekiguchi (Impul) and top rookie Hiroki Otsu (Mugen).

Giuliano Alesi enjoyed a solid debut as a replacement for the absent Kazuki Nakajima at TOM'S, scoring two points for ninth place. The son of ex-grand prix racer Jean narrowly missed out on beating reigning champion Naoki Yamamoto, whose woes continued with a listless run to 10th in qualifying and eighth in the race for Honda team Nakajima Racing. Yamamoto's team-mate Toshiki Oyu squandered his grid slot of third with a diabolical start, dropping all the way to 14th on the opening lap and eventually recovering to score the final point in 10th.

Nobuharu Matsushita struggled on his return to action with B-Max after missing the Fuji curtain-raiser, finishing 13th.

It was likewise a weekend to forget for Tatiana Calderon (Drago Corse), who finished 17th and last and complained of a lack of straightline speed.

JAMIE KLEIN

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WEEKEND WINNERS

SUPER FORMULA
SUZUKA (JPN)
Tomoki Nojiri
Team Mugen (Dallara-Honda)

NASCAR CUP
TALLADEGA (USA)
Brad Keselowski
Team Penske (Ford Mustang)

INDY LIGHTS
ST PETERSBURG (USA)
Race 1 Kyle Kirkwood
Andretti Autosport
Race 2 David Malukas
Global Racing Group with HMD

BRAZILIAN STOCK CARS
GOIANIA (BRA)
Race 1 Daniel Serra
Eurofarma RC (Chevrolet Cruze)
Race 2 Ricardo Mauricio
Eurofarma RC (Chevrolet Cruze)

SUPER FORMULA LIGHTS
SUZUKA (JPN)
Races 1, 2 & 3 Teppei Natori
B-Max Racing (Dallara-Spiess)

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PAUL RICARD 12 HOURS (FRA)
Robert Renauer/Alfred Renauer/
Daniel Allemann/Ralf Bohn
Herberth Motorsport (Porsche 911 GT3-R)

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Keselowski leaves it late for victory

NASCAR CUP
TALLADEGA (USA)
25 APRIL
ROUND 10/36

Brad Keselowski needed only one lap and one opening to earn his first NASCAR Cup Series win of the 2021 season. In a race that featured 35 lead changes among 17 different drivers, Keselowski never led a lap of the Talladega superspeedway until the last one in a two-lap overtime.

He had been following Matt DiBenedetto, but DiBenedetto went high to block a run by Ryan Blaney, and Keselowski saw daylight on the bottom lane. The Team Penske Ford man used a push from Michael McDowell to take the lead and held on for the victory, which means Keselowski becomes the ninth different winner in the first 10 races.

"If you're going to lead 187 and not lead the last one, that's not so good," said



Keselowski. "I think I'll take the last one and that's exactly how it worked out. It opened up, the lane did. Matt went to block [Blaney] and I just barely got inside of him with a huge run. I got a great push from Michael McDowell, which was really helpful and appreciated, so just a big day."

William Byron ended up finishing second in his Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet,

with McDowell (Front Row Ford) third, Kevin Harvick (Stewart-Haas Ford) fourth and DiBenedetto fifth in the Wood Bros Racing Ford.

"Our day will come," said DiBenedetto, still winless in the Cup. "Gosh, it's so hard to come so close in so many of these things. I love what I do."

JIM UTTER

Andretti team kicks off spectacular weekend

INDY LIGHTS
ST PETERSBURG (USA)
24-25 APRIL
ROUND 2/10

Andretti Autosport was pretty much team of the weekend in motorsport last Saturday and Sunday. A day before Jake Dennis won in Formula E at Valencia and Colton Herta in IndyCar in St Petersburg, Kyle Kirkwood triumphed on the Florida streets for the squad in Indy Lights. Combined with his second place on Sunday, that puts Kirkwood into a

three-way title fight with Sunday winner David Malukas and Linus Lundqvist.

Kirkwood led all the way in his home state on Saturday, but it was all action behind. Team-mate Devlin DeFrancesco held second for much of the race, but the Canadian slid off into the barriers at the final turn, causing a caution period. That promoted yet another Andretti driver, Danial Frost, to second, and the Singaporean fended off Malukas, who from the front row had dropped as low as sixth in the race.

Pre-weekend series leader Lundqvist finished ninth following a pitstop due

to damage from clattering into Carlin driver Alex Peroni, who survived to take fifth behind Robert Megennis.

Malukas stayed out front throughout the second race in his Global Racing Group with HMD Motorsports machine. Kirkwood broke the lap record in the closing stages in pursuit, but was unable to prevent the Chicago ace taking the win and the points lead. Lundqvist, having his first race weekend on a street circuit, made up for his Saturday adventures with an excellent seventh-to-fourth lap one, then passed DeFrancesco for third.



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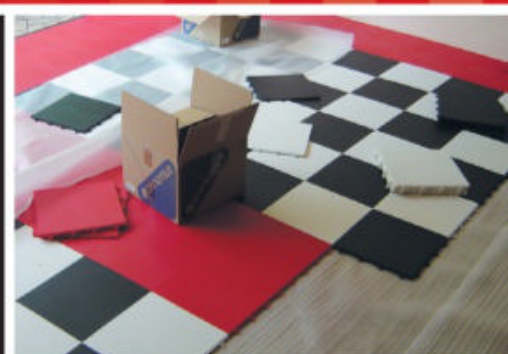
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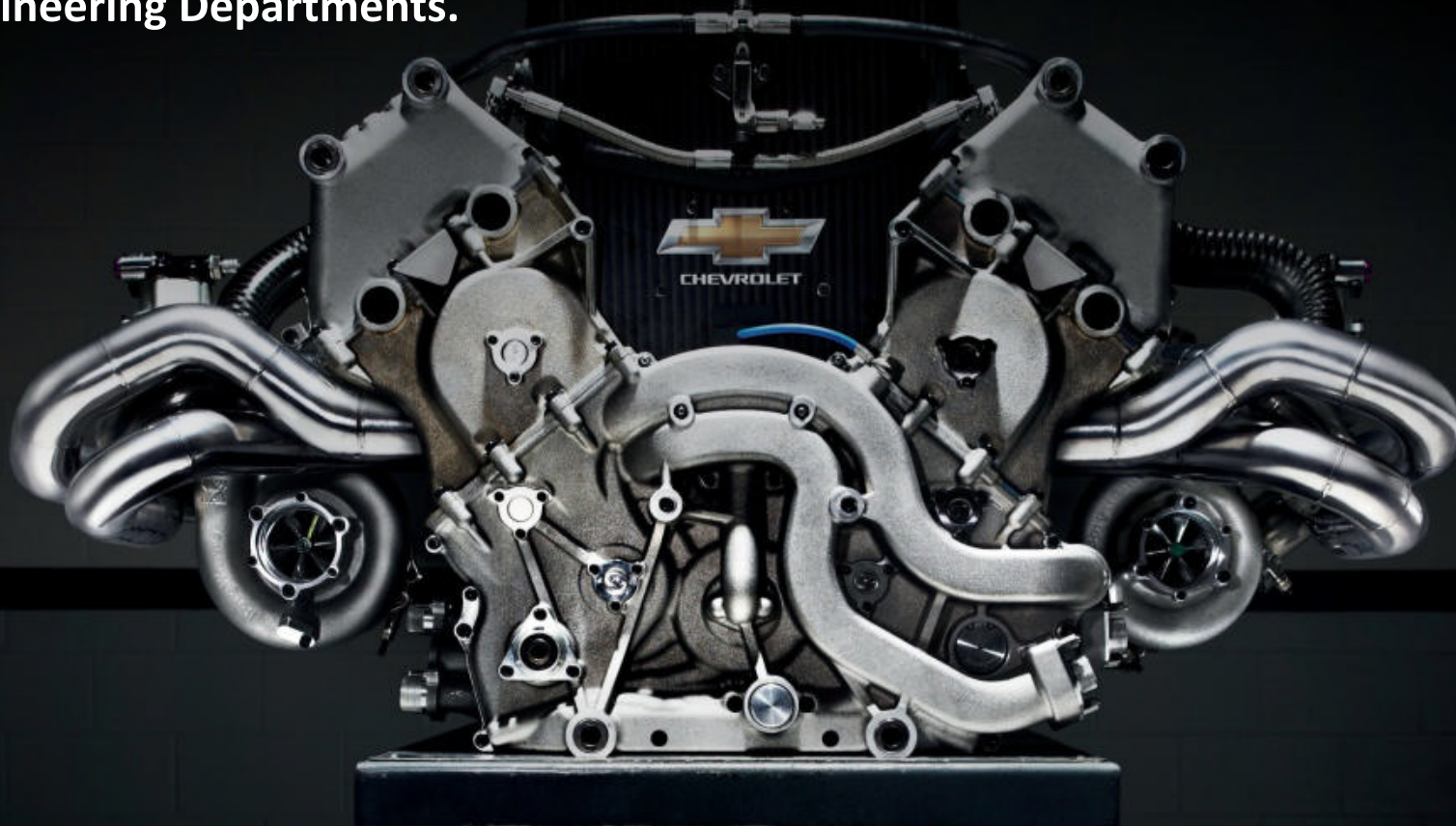
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Tyrrell 011/6
has been fully
rebuilt and is set to
be raced by Tyrrell
next month at
Brands Hatch



KEN TYRRELL TO RACE TYRRELL IN HISTORIC F1

HISTORICS

An American namesake of legendary team chief Ken Tyrrell, who guided Jackie Stewart to three Formula 1 world championships, plans to race a Tyrrell 011 next month.

Florida-based Ken Tyrrell, 52, owns the car with which Michele Alboreto scored the marque's penultimate grand prix victory at Caesar's Palace, Las Vegas, in late September 1982 – the final race of the season.

Tyrrell acquired 011/6 – subsequently an FIA Historic F1 championship race winner – from British competitor John Wilson last summer. After several years lying dormant, it has been totally rebuilt by F1 specialist Liaz Jakhara of Zul Racing in Derby.



Alboreto won with Tyrrell
011/6 at Las Vegas in 1982

Tyrrell's father worked for his John Hopkins University room-mate Bill Wolf, whose Motion Systems business was a team sponsor of Tyrrell Racing in the turbo era of the 1980s.

"As a teenager, I was invited to the 1985 Detroit GP and given a job as Martin Brundle's pitboard man," said Tyrrell. "I was blown away by the experience and, from that moment, I was going to be an F1 driver."

"Bill bought chassis 011/6 and 011/4 [in which Alboreto won the 1983 Detroit GP, the 155th and last frontline F1 win for the Ford-badged Cosworth DFV engine and the final win for Tyrrell] and when I went to his home in New Jersey I sat in 6. I vowed to own it one day and my dream has become reality."

Having rented a Formula Atlantic car to renew his race licence earlier this year, former SCCA Formula Ford 1600 and sportscar racer Tyrrell, who did a Jim Russell School course at Snetterton in 1986, tested the 011/6 at Anglesey earlier this month. He completed 38 laps, describing it as "phenomenal".

Complete Motorsport Solutions of Kimbolton will run the car in selected Masters Historic F1 events, starting at Brands Hatch next month, along with team co-founder Ian Simmonds' ex-Alboreto Tyrrell 012. The Silverstone Classic at the end of July is also on Tyrrell's schedule.

Restoration of chassis 011/4 is nearing completion at Mirage Engineering in Norfolk for owner James Hagan.

MARCUS PYE

[P67 MONACO HISTORIQUE REPORT](#)

Title rivals Burns/Burton join forces

BRITISH GT

The champion and runner-up in the 2020 Ginetta GT4 Supercup will join forces in British GT this season, with Will Burns joining the previously announced Gus Burton at Century Motorsport.

Burns, who beat category rookie Burton to the title by 39 points in a closely fought campaign in which both took five wins, had been set to join the Aspetto Motorsport Ginetta squad for its first season in the championship. But the 30-year-old has now switched allegiances to 2018 GT4 championship-winning squad Century and tested its BMW M4 for the first time at Donington Park last week.

Burns and Burton will be joined in the second car by another GT4 Supercup graduate, Pro-Am runner-up Chris Salkeld and team regular Andrew Gordon-Colebrooke, who won the final race of last year at Silverstone with Rob Wheldon.

Team boss Nathan Freke told Autosport



that he was optimistic the partnership would gel quickly.

“While they were rivals last year, they still had a good relationship off the track and it seemed like an obvious thing to try and pursue,” he said. “It was easy [at the test] because they get on well, the dynamic is very good.”

Freke added that the Silver-graded Burns, who last raced in British GT with HHC Motorsport in 2018, and Burton were firmly targeting the championship.

“This year with the Evo upgrade, and having such a strong driver pairing, it is absolutely our goal to win the championship,” he said. “We always put everything into it but that’s the focus.”

JAMES NEWBOLD



Strong debut for Ginetta G56 GTA

BRITCAR TROPHY

Ginetta’s new G56 GT Academy racer scored a double podium finish on its competitive debut in the Britcar Trophy at Silverstone last weekend.

SVG Motorsport driver Mark Lee was in a three-way lead fight early in race one in the G56 against the pacesetting BMWs, finishing second despite tyre issues late on. Ballast added to the car for race two prevented him from repeating the performance, but he still took a comfortable third.

“It’s great — you can really throw it [into

the corners], it’s a bit like the G40 I’ve driven before,” said Lee about the G56 GTA. “I could outbrake [the BMWs] and get them in the corners but struggled on power.”

The car forms the basis of Ginetta’s new GT Academy, which is designed to be the manufacturer’s new entry-level series and is due to appear at a number of British GT meetings as well as on the support bill at the Silverstone round of the British Touring Car Championship.

The GTA has attracted a number of positive reviews since it was first released last year and reported interest in the new category is strong.

STEVE WHITFIELD

IN THE HEADLINES

MOTORSPORT RETURN IN NI

Northern Ireland has become the second nation within the UK to allow the resumption of motorsport, almost exactly a month after England made the same move. The restart has come too late for the planned Bishopscoort meeting early next month, which has now been postponed until later in the year. The first circuit racing event is set to be at Kirkistown on 29 May.

GT CUP ENTRY FOR PARKER

Team Parker Racing will debut its new Porsche 911 GT3-R in the GT Cup at Brands Hatch this weekend. The car will be driven by its British GT pairing of Scott Malvern and Nick Jones, ahead of the season opener at the venue next month. The team will also field a Cayman in the GT Cup for father and son Justin and Matt Armstrong.

HEDLEY’S BRITISH F4 DEAL

British Formula 4 race winner James Hedley has been confirmed as driving for the Fortec Motorsport squad in the category this year. Autosport previously reported the 2019 Ginetta Junior champion, who took four victories with JHR Developments last year, was targeting a drive with Fortec and that has now been agreed. He becomes the 17th racer announced ahead of the season opener at Thruxton next weekend.

HIBBERT MOVES TO BOSTON

Ginetta GT4 Supercup regular Tom Hibbert will continue in the category for another year, sporting a striking new livery (below) as he moves to join Rob Boston Racing, the squad that powered Will Burns to last year’s title. Hibbert finished third in the standings in 2020, taking three wins. Jack Sherwood – the son of Porsche Carrera Cup GB Am champion Justin – has also joined Elite Motorsport’s Ginetta Junior line-up for this year. The car racing rookie takes the place of Tommy Pintos.





New Supersport Endurance Cup follows success of shorter Clubsport Trophy

BRSCC plans new series with longer endurance races

BRSCC

The British Racing & Sports Car Club is to launch a new Supersport Endurance Cup concept catering for a variety of cars and featuring longer races.

Following the success of the BRSCC's Clubsport Trophy series, which is made up of 45-minute mini-enduros, a number of competitors have been asking the club

whether it could organise longer races.

The first Supersport Endurance Cup contest will take place at Snetterton in July and is due to last for 100 minutes, while a full calendar of races of varying lengths – between an hour and a half and three hours – is planned for 2022.

“Our members were asking if we were going to introduce something longer,” said Greg Graham, the BRSCC's head

of formulae development. “We did plan to launch it this year with four or five events, but COVID and rescheduling dates took away an opportunity to do that. We'll do one this year and then have a full season of events next year, that's the plan.”

Graham explained that, while the new series is similar to the Clubsport Trophy, the club wanted to create “different identities” for the two categories, particularly if it decides to turn one of them into a championship. Prospective drivers have been surveyed and a two-hour race format proved to be the most popular.

Graham added that a lot of effort had been put into creating the class structure for the Supersport Endurance Cup, with six different divisions created based on power-to-weight ratio to ensure a wide range of cars can compete and that each class is competitive.

“The response has been really positive – we've had enquiries from G55 drivers, a couple of TCR owners, right down to Compact Cup and Mazda MX-5s, so it should be a nice mix,” he said. “We took a lot of time investigating which type of cars would fit into the class structure and created the structure targeting specific types of car. The performance differential between the bottom of the class and the top of the class is not so far away [to give close racing across each division].”

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Huge viewing figures for BARC's livestreams

BARC

The British Automobile Racing Club enjoyed bumper viewing figures for the livestreams of its Silverstone meeting last weekend.

The event featured packed grids, while the presence of YouTube star Jimmy Broadbent racing a Praga in the Britcar Endurance series helped take views to well over 200,000 across the club's YouTube and Facebook streams.

“It wasn't harmed at

all by having Jimmy Broadbent on the grid for those races!” said BARC group CEO Ben Taylor. “A lot of people came on to watch him and there were lots of online communities making comments, but that's what we're all after. If we can expose our product to people who wouldn't ordinarily have found it, then that's great.

“We did think it would fall away on Sunday with no Britcar Endurance races, but we had about 70% of

Saturday's levels. There were some teething troubles and we lost some timing graphics at one point but, in general, we're really pleased.

“We're on for 17/18 meetings [being streamed] this year but, if that goes well, maybe we will do more the following year.”

Taylor added the large entries led to the club turning the meeting into two one-day events, with limited space available in the International paddock.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



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IN THE HEADLINES

YORKSHIRE FESTIVAL IS ON

The new Yorkshire Motorsport Festival has been given the green light to run near Holmfirth at the end of June. A main feature of the event will be a closed-roads hillclimb, which has attracted a wide range of historic machinery including an ex-works 1934 Aston Martin LM16 Ulster Le Mans car, the ex-Marsh Plant/Gerry Marshall Modsports Aston Evo4, and a Monte Carlo Rally class-winning Sunbeam Tiger.

F2 RACES AT SILVERSTONE

The Historic Sports Car Club has added two races for its Historic Formula 2 series to its next event at Silverstone on 22-23 May. These in effect replace the May races that were lost following the postponement of the Jim Clark Memorial Meeting at Hockenheim. The club has also announced that the F2 races planned for Paul Ricard in June will now be non-championship contests, amid the continuing travel restrictions.

ANOTHER WIN CHALKED UP

Two-time MG Midget Challenge champion Mike Chalk's victory in the second Midget and Sprite race at Brands Hatch last weekend was his first race win for 27 years. The 71-year-old's last success was at Lydden Hill on 1 May 1994, a date remembered for the death of Ayrton Senna. With a young family, Chalk – who began racing in 1977 and lifted the Midget title in 1988 and 1990 – hung up his helmet before returning to action two years ago.

BELL'S VICTORIOUS RETURN

Former Radical ace and BRDC F4 race winner Matt Bell (below) made a winning return last weekend in the Radical Challenge at Snetterton, six and a half years since his last race. "I hadn't even sat in a car since then, until last Friday," Bell said. He qualified the RAW Motorsports-run car on pole, won the first race and was second in the other two contests, but says it was just a one-off return.



STYLES

M-Sport Fiesta R5 driver was unstoppable at Snetterton



SMJ PHOTOGRAPHY

Yates takes the spoils as Circuit Rally Championship resumes

RALLYING

Rhys Yates and James Morgan's M-Sport Ford Fiesta R5 came out on top at Snetterton last weekend as the Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship roared back into action.

Former WRC2 driver Yates had been fastest on the first four stages to build a 15-second advantage on Frank Bird/Jack Morton, who were out in a Fiesta R5 for the first time. Bird pulled a second back on stage five, and was quickest on the final test, but it was Yates's victory by 14s.

The Fiesta R5 of Mark Kelly/Neil Colman settled in third from the start and retained the place all day, while Rob

Swann/Steve McNulty (Subaru S12B WRC) slipped to sixth with a misfire after going fourth on the opening stage, before retiring with gearbox woe.

Fiesta crew Elliot Payne/Cam Fair moved up to fourth, but came under pressure from the Fiesta S2000T of Kevin Procter/Dave Bellerby. Payne consolidated his place in the second half, while his father Charlie took sixth behind Procter.

David Henderson/Chris Williams took a class win in seventh and their Escort was the first two-wheel-drive car, while ninth-placed former champions Chris West/Keith Hounslow were also class winners in Nigel Mummery's Porsche 997 GT3.

PETER SCHERER

Le Mans and cash prizes for Fun Cup

FUN CUP

UK Fun Cup drivers are set to be eligible to take part in a new support race at the Le Mans 24 Hours this year, while a £10,000 prize for new winners is aimed at attracting drivers into the championship.

The European version of Fun Cup is due to hold a five-hour race on the Friday of the Le Mans weekend in August, making it the first time Fun Cup cars will race on the full-length circuit. The cars

regularly compete on the shorter Bugatti layout.

"All drivers and teams are eligible for the Le Mans race," said UK championship director Paul Rose. "It's early days and I've only had one enquiry so far but, as we haven't been able to include a European race on the UK calendar, this is a great chance to get across the channel this season, COVID permitting."

Rose is also offering £10,000 to any driver new to the series who takes a win this season,

with £3000 for a second-placed finish and £1000 for third.

"The incentive has actually been around for two or three years," said Rose. "It started as a chat in the bar at Oulton Park with a couple of drivers who said they could win in the Fun Cup. I made them the offer and decided to roll it out to any newcomer."

"So far I've been lucky and not had to part with any of the cash... and the two guys never did attempt it!"

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A very strong start

There are plenty of positives to take from the amount of interest in club motorsport, a month after it was given the green light

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Pent-up demand? Whether it's people desperately booking long-overdue appointments at hairdressers or families entering a bidding war to secure holiday accommodation in the most popular UK areas, it's an expression that has been repeated time and time again as we ease out of lockdown restrictions. And it most certainly applies in a motorsport context, too.

Today (29 April) marks exactly a month since non-elite motorsport was able to resume in England, making now a good moment to take stock of how those initial few weeks have played out. And there has been endless evidence of pent-up demand from competitors, with some massive grids at those first race meetings. Twelve categories have boasted entries of 40 cars or more, a stunning achievement amid difficult financial circumstances.

Leading the way has been the British Automobile Racing Club's Caterham Graduates category, which attracted 69 cars across two grids at Oulton Park – entry levels the series has not enjoyed for several years. MotorSport Vision Racing's 7 Race Series also boasted 56 cars at its Oulton opener, suggesting there are plenty of competitors looking to race their Caterhams. Other categories above 50 cars included MotorSport Vision Trackdays' five-hour EnduroKa opener with 51, while split grids for Monoposto and Swinging Sixties have also reached 50. Completing the dozen above 40 are the 750 Motor Club's MX-5 Cup, Club Enduro,

“The BARC attracted over 200,000 people to livestreams of its Silverstone meeting”

MR2 and Roadsports divisions, along with the Britcar Trophy, Classic Sports Car Club Tin Tops and Equipe GTS.

But, as impressive as those individual entries are, it's the wider picture that really shows how club racing seems to be thriving at the moment. Of the 77 categories to have held a race that have comparable data to last year, 55 (or 71%) have enjoyed opening-round grids that were higher than their 2020 average. Even better is that, of those 55 series, 32 had an entry that was higher than they managed at any point during the past year. There are some brilliant success stories among these, such as the 750MC's Type R Trophy surging from barely mustering double figures to 31 cars for its Silverstone opener last weekend, and the GT Cup storming from the low 20s to 38 and then even higher for its second event at Brands Hatch this weekend. The Classic Touring Car Racing Club

has also worked hard on several new initiatives over the winter and was another to significantly increase numbers.

We also have to consider that the traditionally oversubscribed CSCC had to amalgamate some of its grids to squeeze into a one-day Oulton Park meeting, lowering some of the numbers, while the HSCC opener was at Snetterton – not traditionally one of the club's best-attended fixtures. And many categories – including the entire British Racing and Sports Car Club portfolio – have yet to begin at all. However, it must be pointed out that the massive entries have not quite been universal. Nineteen categories had an opening round with fewer cars than their 2020 average, while three matched their value from last year, and there were some single-figure grids among these.

It's not just in terms of competitors that interest has been high. The BARC attracted over 200,000 people to livestreams of its Silverstone meeting last weekend – a staggering figure. Yes, a lot were there to watch YouTube star Jimmy Broadbent race a Praga, but comments like “came for Jim in the Praga, stayed for the eight-way Mini Miglia battle”, suggest that a new audience could be found for club motorsport.

A number of factors have been suggested for the generally strong start to the English racing season. While desperation to get back out on track after an extended winter break is certainly one, there are plenty of other possible explanations. Motorsport offering an escape from the depressing impacts of the coronavirus pandemic is one. As people are still unable to travel abroad, eat inside a restaurant or spectate at sporting events, it's one small glimpse of normality. Given people are not spending in these other areas, some are able to put money into motorsport instead.

One interesting suggestion is that, with the advancement of electric cars and the government target for phasing out petrol/diesel machines looming closer, people are competing in their internal combustion engined cars while they can. On a more short-term level, there's no guarantee that another wave of COVID-19 will not arrive on these shores and halt motorsport in its tracks, again leading some to race while the opportunity exists.

The question now is how long will these impressive grid sizes continue? Organisers need to be looking at ways to make sure the numbers are sustained across the year and are not just one-offs. We do not know what the impact of the end of furlough will be, for example – with many citing that as a possible moment when the economic realities of the pandemic will really start to bite.

For now, though, it is just a shame that spectators are not able to witness in person the packed grids that marshals and empty viewing banks have enjoyed. The pent-up demand has been incredibly reassuring to see, but the real challenge may still lie ahead. 🏁



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Lyons bags hat-trick as Alesi and Werner collide



MONACO GP HISTORIQUE 24-25 APRIL

Michael Lyons scored a hat-trick of three-litre Formula 1 victories at the 12th Monaco Grand Prix Historique last weekend, while the major talking point from the event was a clash between Jean Alesi and Marco Werner.

Lyons opened in superb style in the 1966-'72 Jackie Stewart encounter, driving the ex-John Love Surtees TS9/003. Outdragged at the start by Stuart Hall in Roald Goethe's McLaren M19A/2, Lyons screamed past Denny Hulme's 1972 South African GP winner on the climb to Casino Square. He resisted immense pressure thereafter to take the win by 0.722 seconds as Jamie Constable (Brabham BT37/2) completed the podium.



The Niki Lauda 1973-'76 showcase was sensational, but ended controversially. For 14 glorious laps, fast-starting Alesi (Ferrari 312B3) staved off triple Le Mans victor Werner (Lotus 77/2). When the Ferrari seemingly faltered under acceleration out of the final turn – as if Alesi had missed a gear – Werner made light contact and the 312B3 was sent into the pitwall. Werner completed the final two laps with a nose fin askew as a crash coming out of Casino Square for a Surtees brought out the red flags.

Only when the German approached the podium did news of a 25-second penalty emerge, dropping him to third behind Lyons (ex-Patrick Tambay McLaren M26/1) and young Porsche Carrera Cup champion Julien Andlauer (March 761). Historic F1 debutant Andlauer, who hadn't driven a single-seater since his French F4 days, impressed in one of several GP Extreme entries.

Lyons outpsyched Gilles Villeneuve 1977-'80 poleman Jordan Grogor (GPE Arrows A3), passing him into Sainte Devote in his Hesketh 308E at the start. South African Grogor clonked the Tabac barrier while chasing, then retired with further damage. A fight for second between Tyrrell 010 drivers Evens Stievenart and Mike Cantillon raged until contact launched French cycle racing legend Stievenart into the barrier at Rascasse.

WEEKEND WINNERS

F1 1966-'72 GRAND PRIX CARS

Michael Lyons (Surtees TS9, left)

F1 1973-'76 GRAND PRIX CARS

Michael Lyons (McLaren M26)

F1 1977-'80 GRAND PRIX CARS

Michael Lyons (Hesketh 308E)

F1/F2 PRE-1961 GRAND PRIX CARS

Guillermo Fierro-Eleta (Maserati 250F)

SPORTS RACING CARS

Guillermo Fierro-Eleta (Maserati 300S)

F1 1961-'65 GRAND PRIX CARS

Mark Shaw (Lotus 21)

PRE-WAR GRAND PRIX CARS

Christian Traber (Talbot-Lago)

For full results visit: acm.mc

Cantillon kept second, with 2019 FIA Masters champion Matteo Ferrer-Aza (Ligier JS11/15) third from the back.

Spaniard Guillermo Fierro-Eleta won the Pre-1961 GP car race in his Maserati 250F and the Sportscar contest in his 300S after early leader David Hart pranged his similar car. Max Smith-Hilliard (Lotus 16) and sandal magnate Alex Birkenstock (Ferrari 246 Dino) led the chase in the former. Niklas Halusa (Jaguar D-type) and Nicolas Bert (Jaguar C-type) completed the latter's rostrum.

Scot Mark Shaw dominated the slim Graham Hill 1961-'65 1500cc F1 race in the ex-Jim Clark '61 Springbok Series-winning Lotus 21, in which Simon Hadfield won the 2008 Monaco race for Bob Tabor. Nick Taylor (Lotus 18) and Swiss Philipp Buhofer (Lotus 24) chased the ex-F3000 racer home.

Patrick Blakeney-Edwards led the Louis Chiron Pre-War race until his Frazer-Nash Monoposto overheated, gifting victory to Christian Traber (Talbot-Lago).

MARCUS PYE

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Deegan leads
Shepherd in the
battle for Type R
Trophy victories



Shepherd and Deegan come out on top

SILVERSTONE 750MC 24-25 APRIL

The debut of the Type R Trophy as a fully fledged championship was both well-subscribed and explosive at the 750 Motor Club's Silverstone meeting.

Adam Shepherd was declared the first race winner after Luke Rosewell received a five-second penalty for exceeding track limits and gaining an advantage. Rosewell, who had passed Lee Deegan for the lead on the final lap when Deegan lost control of his Civic and went into a slide, had

crossed the line first but dropped to third with his penalty.

Up until that point, double Civic Cup champion Deegan had led the whole race while Rosewell snapped at his heels consistently, the two even trading paint at times. Shepherd kept pace with the leading pair and came close to passing Rosewell on track, particularly when the leading group had backmarkers to navigate.

Deegan won race two, avoiding mistakes this time. Shepherd was a very close second, with just 0.2s separating him from Deegan and near-identical fastest lap times. Rosewell was third again,

ahead of Arron Sharp, who made a bid for the lead at the start and contributed to a three-way scrap for second at Copse.

The BMW Car Club Racing Championship was a two-part comeback story as Niall Bradley's consistency and control brought him out on top twice. The fastest car on track in race one was Brad Sheehan's M3, but an alternator failure dumped him out from what looked like a safe lead. The M3 of Michael Cutt was the next to take its turn at the front, but Cutt got a little overenthusiastic and spun, giving the lead and the win to Bradley. Rick Kerry's diesel 1 Series was second, ahead of Cutt.

Sheehan borrowed a spare alternator from Cutt to get out for race two and made short work of progressing from the back, breaking into the top 10 by lap three. By the end, he was right on the tail of Bradley's E46 M3, but Bradley hung on for a second win, with Cutt third again.

More comeback exploits were on the menu in the Alfa Romeo Championship. Barry McMahon was the winner of both encounters, dominating in his 156. Chief rival was Gareth Haywood, back in action in his GTV for the first time since 2012, but his challenge was ended early on by a coolant leak in the first race, leaving George Osborne (Alfa Romeo 75) to push his way to the runner-up spot. He fought

Mills leads the Roadsports
field on his way to taking
the overall victory



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: JONES



off the GT of Tom Hill and Graham Seager's rapid 147 GTA, with Seager claiming the final podium position.

With the cooling system reassembled, Haywood was able to mount a consistent challenge to McMahon and led the second race for a number of laps, after coming through from the back of the class. It was only a shove from behind by another competitor that caused him to lose touch with McMahon. A combative Seager was third after he had to fight hard with Osborne, but Hill's car was down on power and Seager was able to pass him much more easily.

Chris Mills (BMW M3) won the Roadsports race from Jamie Sturges's SEAT Leon. Sturges had been the early leader, but red flags came out after a multi-car pile-up on the first lap and some subsequent retirements left too many cars stranded.

Mills and Sturges drew some order from the chaos on the restart, trading the lead in a fast but fair game of cat and mouse. Ultimately, the superior torque of Mills's car allowed him to pull ahead, as well as taking his mandatory pitstop earlier. Nick Vaughan was third in an Audi A3, more than 40s behind second-placed Sturges.

The opening rounds of the F1000 championship brought some new contenders to the fore. Lee Morgan won

the first race convincingly from Elliott Mitchell, who inherited second when Matthew Booth received 15s of penalties for exceeding track limits, while 2020 champion Dan Clowes was struggling with various car problems and could only manage sixth.

The reversed-grid race did not present many problems for Morgan, and Booth kept it clean to keep his second place this time. Morgan was denied a clean sweep by broken front suspension in race three, which allowed Mitchell to take his maiden series win.

The Sport Specials podium also looked a little different from last year. Martin Gambling won the first race in his Eclipse SM1 from the sister Eclipse of Paul Collingwood. Collingwood took the lead briefly on lap two but spun on some oil and allowed Gambling back in front. Andy Hiley, dominant last year in his self-built Chronos HR1S, could only manage third as he was struggling with a broken clutch master cylinder.

Gambling had built up a big lead in the second race when his car's electrics failed, giving the win to Cyana Mk2 driver Anton Landon. Hiley had dropped out early and Collingwood also had to retire with a misfire. Darren Berris (Westfield) was second, ahead of Class C winner Stewart Mutch in his MEV Exocet, which

WEEKEND WINNERS

TYPE R TROPHY

Race 1 Adam Shepherd

Race 2 Lee Deegan

BMW CAR CLUB RACING

Races 1 & 2 Niall Bradley (E46 M3)

ALFA ROMEOS

Races 1 & 2 Barry McMahon (156)

ROADSPORTS

Chris Mills (BMW M3)

F1000

Races 1 & 2 Lee Morgan

Race 3 Elliott Mitchell

SPORT SPECIALS

Race 1 Martin Gambling (Eclipse SM1)

Race 2 Anton Landon (Cyana Mk2)

SPORTS 1000

Race 1 Ryan Yarrow (Spire GT3S)

Race 2 Michael Roots (Mittell MC-53)

MA7DA

Races 1 & 2 Danny Andrew

116 TROPHY

Mark Burton

750 FORMULA

Race 1 Mark Glover (Racekits Falcon)

Race 2 Ed Pither (PRS 1b)

CLASSIC STOCK HATCH

Races 1 & 2 Stewart Place (Peugeot 205 GTi)

For full results visit: 750mc.co.uk

ran as high as second place before being passed by Berris.

New winners eventually appeared in Sports 1000. Reigning champion Ryan Yarrow (Spire) was awarded the win in the first encounter after six cars, including provisional winner Michael Roots in a Mittell MC-53, were disqualified for ride-height infringements. Roots fought from the back of the grid to win race two.

The Ma7da series had its first races as a full championship and Danny Andrew won the opener by 0.05s, coming out on top of a five-car sprint at the line. His second victory was much more secure and the finish-line scramble was for second, with David Mason, Ben Powney and David Winter within a tenth of one another.

Mark Burton won the 116 Trophy contest by just over 10s from Simon Walker-Hansell, with Alex and Guy Povey in third. Samuel Carrington-Yates and Mark Sullivan led for most of the 90-minute race but admitted to a few mistakes and a mistimed pitstop. They were fifth in what was only Sullivan's second race.

RACHEL HARRIS-GARDINER



There was no stopping Seale and Stanley at Silverstone

Lambo duo Seale double win as Britcar begins

SILVERSTONE
BARC
24-25 APRIL

John Seale and Jamie Stanley powered to two victories during the opening round of the Britcar Endurance Championship, as the Silverstone International circuit played host to some bumper grids across the weekend.

The duo took pole for the first race in a Lamborghini Huracan GT3, the only car to set a sub-one-minute lap in qualifying. Seale was outdragged to the first corner by Richard Wells and Abbie Eaton, but regained the lead when the Praga duo tangled just seconds later.

A hefty crash between Class 4 runners Luke Davenport (Ligier JS2-R) and George Heler (TCR) necessitated a 10-minute caution period. But Stanley cruised to victory after taking over driving duties from Seale, while last season's championship runner-up Jack Fabbey

took second place alongside Charlie Martin, the pairing taking maiden honours in the new Praga class.

A seven-car opening lap pile-up led to the first 20 minutes of race two being run behind the safety car. This could have proved costly for the race-one victors, who needed to serve a 15-second success penalty at their mandatory stop. But Seale was able to build a big enough advantage once racing resumed, with Stanley completing another comfortable win after jumping into the car.

After their disappointment in the first encounter, Eaton and Gordie Mutch – the fastest pairing in the Praga category throughout the meeting – came from near the rear of the field to take the class victory and second overall. Reigning champion Danny Harrison swapped the Praga he shared with Jem Hepworth last year for a Nissan GT3 car, finishing fifth and third overall in the two races alongside Richard Wheeler.

Simon Baker and Kevin Clarke took

a pair of wins as the Britcar Trophy's sophomore season got under way. Driving his BMW 1 Series, Baker was embroiled in a thrilling three-way lead scrap with Jasver Sapra's BMW M3 and Mark Lee's Ginetta G56A in the first half of race one. But Clarke found himself with a big lead once he had taken over the car from Baker, and he duly converted it into victory by half a minute. Lee, on solo driving duties, took second, while a clutch issue hampered experienced GT racer Lucky Khera after taking over from Sapra. Baker and Clarke dominated race two ahead of Sapra and Khera.

Peter Smith impressed in Pre-66 Touring Cars by winning both races in his Lotus Cortina, despite having never raced at Silverstone before. Smith, the father of Le Mans winner Guy and who has a background in rallying, started on pole for the first race but lost the lead initially to Alan Greenhalgh. After leading for five laps, Greenhalgh spun his Ford Falcon at Abbey, with Smith benefiting to take victory. Greenhalgh dropped to fifth, but recovered to third by the finish.

Smith took a lights-to-flag win in the second encounter, while Ollie Attard (Ford Cortina) came out on top in a frenetic scrap for second with Greenhalgh. The race was red-flagged with three minutes remaining when Kevin Bottomley rolled his Mini Cooper S at Club.

Endaf Owens took pole for the opening race in the Mini Miglia Challenge, but lost the lead off the line to historic racer Nick Padmore. Owens retook the advantage a few laps later at Stowe and held off a pack of seven cars, led by 2013 British Touring Car champion Andrew Jordan, to take victory.

Rupert Deeth led until two minutes



Owens battles to keep the Mini Miglia pack at bay

WEEKEND WINNERS

BRITCAR ENDURANCE

Races 1 & 2 John Seale/Jamie Stanley
(Lamborghini Huracan GT3)

BRITCAR TROPHY

Races 1 & 2 Simon Baker/Kevin Clarke
(BMW 1 Series)

PRE-'66 TOURING CARS

Races 1 & 2 Peter Smith (Ford Lotus Cortina)

MINI MIGLIA

Race 1 Endaf Owens
Race 2 Nick Padmore

MINI SE7EN

Races 1 & 2 Joe Thompson

PRE-'83 TOURING CARS/JEC SALOONS & GTs

Races 1 & 2 Tom Robinson (Jaguar XJR6, below)

HISTORIC THUNDER SALOONS/BOSS

Races 1 & 2 Ric Wood (Holden Commodore)

PRE-'93 & PRE-'03 TOURING CARS

Races 1 & 2 AJ Owen (Honda Civic Type R)

TOURING CAR TROPHY/VW CUP

Race 1 Max Hart (Hyundai i30 N TCR)

Race 2 Lewis Kent (Hyundai i30 N TCR)



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

remaining in the reversed-grid race two. Then, after being passed by Padmore and Jordan on the Hangar Straight, he slowed with an issue. Jordan just missed out again, as Padmore held on for the win.

A poor start from pole dropped reigning champion Jeff Smith down the order in the first of the Mini Se7en encounters. Joe Thompson took the lead after pulling off a spectacular double overtake at Village on the opening lap. He stayed there until the finish, surviving late pressure from the recovering Smith, who finished just half a second behind.

Despite sharing the fourth row in the reversed-grid race, victory was once again contested between Thompson and Smith after carving their way up the order. The pair traded the lead several times in the final seven minutes, with Thompson prevailing again by an even smaller margin of 0.188s.

STEVE WHITFIELD

NEW DAWN FOR PRAGA AS CLASS
BATTLE GETS UNDER WAY

After taking the Britcar Endurance crown last year, Praga returned to the series with its own class at the weekend and, as expected, the seven competing cars were mostly found at the sharp end of the overall field.

Drivers of a wide variety of experience were in action in the Praga R1 machines, with race-one class winner Charlie Martin, who has competed in various endurance series, praising its high-speed performance. "It's such a capable car," Martin said. "On a track like Silverstone, in the faster bends – like Abbey and Farm – it just grips so well. It really is a bit of a giantkiller against the GT3 cars, which have a lot more power."

Ed Bridle who, along with twin brother Chris, was making his debut at this level said: "I came from Fun Cup, so a really big step up. But the car is really nice to drive, easy to find the time in – it gives you a lot of confidence." The brothers did, however, suffer with a car issue that they felt hampered their pace.

The first round was one of mixed emotions for Abbie Eaton and Gordie Mutch. Eaton, the quickest driver in class across the day, was involved in a collision with Praga rival Richard Wells, which damaged the car on the opening

lap of race one. Eaton came through the field in the first half of race two before handing the car over in the class lead to Mutch, who went on to take the win.

"Quite relieved, especially after race one and the first-lap incident," reflected Mutch. "There's nothing else Abbie could have done there, she was the innocent party, which is a shame because her pace has been awesome all weekend. We felt like we were robbed of that first win, but we picked ourselves up. It was a really tough job coming from the back of the grid – Abbie put in an awesome first stint and handed over a very good car to me to go and get the win."

Martin and Jack Fabby ended the first round leading the class standings, despite a bizarre spin for Fabby towards the end of race two after a GoPro camera fell into the pedal assembly. "My main goal was to start the way I finished at Snetterton last year by winning," said Fabby. "We've won [race one] and, in a difficult race two, we've come second. Everyone else has had a bit of a rocky weekend, whereas we have had consistency, something that me and Charlie have spoken a lot about."

YouTube star Jimmy Broadbent took a pair of fourth places in class, sharing a car with reigning Endurance champion Jem Hepworth. Broadbent, who has competed in a variety of categories in recent weeks to gain licence signatures, felt his virtual racing background helped him deal with the multi-class style of racing in Britcar. "All those years doing 'fake racing' and learning how the traffic works really paid off," he said. "Just knowing when to pick the moment, when to back out of it."

STEVE WHITFIELD



Williams takes the double in MG Cup races

BRANDS HATCH

MGCC

24-25 APRIL

A pair of hard-fought MG Cup contests were highlights of the MG Car Club's season opener at Brands Hatch, with Mike Williams coming from behind to prevail on each occasion.

Despite his Rover Metro being pegged back with a more standard VVC engine this year, Williams beat Morgan Short's new MG ZS to pole, but it was Matt Simpson's powerful Rover Tomcat that led them away, with Williams dropping to third.

Williams passed Short at Graham Hill Bend for second, but was demoted on countback when Ian Boulton's heavy accident caused a red flag. Short led the restart, before Williams slid inside Simpson at Druids, then dived past Short for the lead at Surtees mid-race.

Williams was heading for a more comfortable success in race two, but rotated when faced with spinning traffic at Graham Hill Bend just after half distance. Short – relegated to third in race one for track-limits infringements – moved ahead, but was quickly chased down by the determined Williams. Tim Shooter took a double win in the concurrent MG Metro Cup after the leading trio of Mark Eales, Dan Willars and Tim Davies tangled in the first race.

Four Modsports-spec Midgets put on a thrilling first Midget & Sprite Challenge race. Mike Chalk, Richard Wildman, Martin Morris and David Weston could barely be separated before Chalk lost the lead – and precious time – when he



Williams had to work hard for both wins and was pressured by Short

missed the green after a yellow-flag zone. Morris's attempted inside pass on the leading Wildman at Paddock Hill Bend proved decisive, but not as intended. Contact broke Morris's steering arm and bent Wildman's rear axle, and Weston nipped past both. Wildman continued and pressed Weston home after a safety car interruption, as Chalk recovered to third.

With Wildman and Morris sidelined, and Weston handing over to son Edd for race two, the way was clear for Chalk to take his first race win for 27 years. Class E runners Tom Walker and Pippa Cow kept him honest with terrific pace, Cow only losing second to a late spin.

TVR Granturas dominated the Equipe GTS clashes, in which the large entry was split in half. Mark Ashworth, Rob Cull and Robi Bernberg were separated by little in the first until Cull's differential let go. Ashworth took victory, before Mark

Owen overcame both Ashworth and Cull the next day to win.

In between, Lee Atkins took the honours in a race restarted after Chris Ryan ran over his Triumph TR4's own departed wheel and rolled at Clark Curve. But for reliability woes, a Grantura clean sweep was on the cards, but Tom Smith (MGB) benefited from Atkins's head gasket failure to win Sunday's first edition in typically lairy style from Andrew Wenman's even-more-sideways Morgan.

Peter Haynes's ex-Philip Walker Lotus Eleven was in a class of its own as he lapped the entire Equipe Pre-'63/50s field on Sunday. A day earlier, polesitter Haynes had lost track of time when fettling the car and missed the race. In his absence, Roberto Giordanelli's Jaguar E-type was untroubled. Runner-up James Haxton's Austin-Healey 3000 was almost able to match Giordanelli's pace, but only after working his way through



Owen (34) chases down Cull before going on to win the final GTS race

WEEKEND WINNERS

MG CUP/MG METRO CUP**Races 1 & 2** Mike Williams (Rover Metro GTI)**MIDGET & SPRITE CHALLENGE****Race 1** David Weston (MG Midget)**Race 2** Mike Chalk (MG Midget)**EQUIPE GTS****Race 1** Mark Ashworth (TVR Grantura Mk3)**Race 2** Lee Atkins (TVR Grantura 1800S)**Race 3** Tom Smith (MGB)**Race 4** Mark Owen (TVR Grantura Mk3)**EQUIPE PRE-'63/50s****Race 1** Roberto Giordanelli (Jaguar E-type DHC)**Race 2** Peter Haynes (Lotus Eleven Le Mans)**MG TROPHY****Races 1 & 2** Sam Kirkpatrick (ZR 190)**BCV8s****Races 1 & 2** Ollie Neaves (MGB GTV8)**TRIPLE-M CHALLENGE****Races 1 & 2** Oliver Sharp (MG N-Type Magnette)**EQUIPE LIBRE****Race 1** Chris Beighton (Sunbeam Le Mans Tiger)**Race 2** James Haxton (Austin-Healey 3000 Mk1)**MORGAN CHALLENGE****Races 1 & 2** Oliver Pratt (+8)**For full results visit:** tsl-timing.com

A FAMILY TREASURE Raced by his grandfather and father since the 1960s, Oliver Sharp's pre-war MG N-Type Magnette is a family treasure. Sharp has developed its Weslake-tuned engine, now capable of 8000rpm, with six carburetors to match its six cylinders. "It's like an old friend," said Sharp, who won both Triple-M races with it. "Since my earliest memories, this car has been around and it's really nice to grow up and develop it. My grandfather died last year; he'd have loved to see it going like this."



UK vs USA Equipe Libre provided a contest of Yank tanks versus British sportscars. Adam Brindle led the way for the States, driving his Mike Jordan-built 1965 Ford Falcon for the first time. He finished third in race two, the grunt of the Falcon on the straights unable to overcome the greater agility of James Haxton's Austin-Healey and Rob Cull's TVR Grantura. Haxton was third behind Chris Beighton's Sunbeam Le Mans Tiger and Jaguar XKE of Rick Willmott a day earlier, while Brindle was 10th.



VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE American Alex Quattlebaum's unique LECo Sport added variety to the Equipe 50s grid. Built in 1954 by the Liss Engineering Company in Havant, the original MG TC engine had been replaced by MGB power when Quattlebaum acquired it nearly 40 years ago. "I thought it was a Tojeiro for years but the British Motor Museum said, 'No, it's a LECo,'" said Quattlebaum. Restored to original specification, it took a best result of 11th from both its outings.

from row three of the grid.

After Formula Ford Festival winner Rory Smith's Turner Mk2 had dropped a cylinder, Robin Ellis eased his Lotus Elite to third. Nigel Winchester's new Shelby 260 fended off Joe Willmott (Elva Courier) in the closing stages for fourth, before improving to second ahead of Haxton and Wenman in race two.

Sam Kirkpatrick twice topped the MG Trophy field from pole position. Fellow front-row man Fred Burgess first had to clear fast-starting Patrick Booth before challenging the leader in race one, but Kirkpatrick was able to repel his concerted efforts, before taking a more comfortable win in race two.

Doug Cole was a distant third in the opener, but shot ahead in race two, only to slide down the order with a couple of trips through the gravel. Adam Jackson completed race two's podium, charging to third from 14th on the grid to banish the disappointment of being the collateral damage when Booth's engine seized earlier.

Reigning champion Ollie Neaves stormed to double BCV8 success, easing clear of Russell McCarthy on both occasions, while Neil Fowler's new car made a promising debut with two podiums.

MARK PAULSON



Caton (leading) and Hand (behind) were class of the field in Junior Saloon Car Championship

Caton and Hand share JSCC spoils amid red flags

CADWELL PARK
BARC
24-25 APRIL

Harvey Caton and Charlie Hand came to the fore and took their maiden victories in the Junior Saloon Car Championship at Cadwell Park amid three red flags.

Hand had just taken the lead from Caton at Mansfield when the first race was halted after Jamie Goode crashed at the Gooseneck following contact with Tommy Gilham. Caton was back ahead at the restart, with Hand reclaiming second from Alfie Jeakins

into the Gooseneck. But, with the tow well broken and another red flag on the third lap, Caton was home and dry, with Hand and Jeakins completing the podium.

Hand made a flying start in race two to lead from Caton and Ruben Hage, while Jeakins quickly recovered to third before there was a red flag on the fifth lap. While Hand cleared off for a lights-to-flag win at the restart, there was a five-car train for second. After Caton went off on lap two, Jeakins held Aaron Walker at bay, with Oliver Cottam beating Hage to fourth.

Peter Sparrow may have led both 2CV

races from start to finish, but the battle for second went right to the flag in each. In race one, Nick Crispin found himself swallowed up by Sandro Proietti and Kris Tovey, who traded places for the entire race. Proietti made the decisive move into the Gooseneck on the final lap, leaving Tovey to settle for third from a solitary Crispin.

The second race followed a similar pattern, with Luca Proietti duelling for second with Tovey. It was mainly in Proietti's favour in the first half, before Tovey got by on lap six of 10. He started the last lap in second, but Proietti made

Tight Tin Top affairs at Lydden

LYDDEN HILL
CMMC
24 APRIL

Warren Johnson may have won the first Tin Tops race from pole in the Classic and Modern Motorsport Club's Southern branch season opener, but such a simplistic assessment disregards how hard he had to fight for the trophy.

With his Peugeot 205 GTI mugged for the lead at the start by Daniel Fisher, Johnson had to keep the pressure up in order to hang on to the Honda Civic Type R's coattails. Despite it being Fisher's first time at Lydden Hill, he seemed to have mastered the defensive lines to hold Johnson at bay.

Johnson's dive at Paddock Bend wasn't to stick on lap 10 of 12, but it was a committed lunge up the inside of Fisher at the hairpin with minutes to go that was the decider. The race was red-flagged shortly after when Fisher, now in pursuit,

got out of shape on the grass on the start/finish straight and clattered the barriers.

Johnson couldn't quite make it two from two, instead having to settle for second in the later race. The Peugeot started on pole, but Dave Hutchins's Civic Type R got a better launch and whipped past into Pilgrims. Despite the best efforts of Johnson to stalk the leader, Hutchins held firm, while Fisher was unable to take to the second race as a result of car damage following his shunt earlier in the day.

Colin Smith had to make his Vauxhall Tigra as wide as possible in the Intermarque Silhouettes, somehow keeping Lewis Smith (Tigra) and Ray Harris in his Ginetta G40R at bay. It all came down to a last-lap scuffle as they went three-wide on the run to the line, with Colin Smith just coming ahead of Lewis Smith and Harris.

Even with a heavy week moving his business premises, Harris had enough energy to make amends in race two, in which he battled with Danny Smith, son of



Johnson did just enough to win opening race

race-one winner Colin, for the lead. On lap three of 21, Harris nudged his Ginetta through at Devil's Elbow, slyly followed by Lewis Smith and then Mike Thurley at North Bend. But, crucially, as Lewis Smith, Colin Smith and Thurley squabbled for the lesser podium spots, Harris was able to build a comfortable lead, crossing the line 4.42s ahead of Hot Rod ace Colin Smith. Lewis Smith was forced to park up three laps from home when smoke billowed from



Cursley (88) and Dendy (69) shared the wins in Hyundai Coupe Cup

READ

his move into Chris Curve and, with yellow flags at the next corner, Tovey had to accept third again. Crispin again came home a solitary fourth.

It was anyone from three in the first of the Legends heats, as Miles Rudman, John Mickel and Will Gibson battled for victory. Rudman went ahead a lap from home to take the win from Mickel and Gibson.

Nathan Anthony held off Robin Fountain for the first three laps of heat two, before Jack Parker and Sean Smith caught them both. Parker hit the front on lap four of six, with Smith just holding off Fountain for second as Anthony slipped to fourth.

Parker battled through the order in Saturday's final too, and snatched the lead from Chris Needham. But, after this duo tripped each other up on the last lap, Stephen Whitelegg took the spoils from Smith and Rudman.

Needham and Gibson both led Sunday's

opener, until Rudman got the pair on lap four for his second win of the weekend. Daniel Clark claimed second on the last tour, with Needham still close in third.

Mickel ousted early leader Steven McGill on the third lap in the final heat, but was shadowed to the flag by Rudman, Gibson and Smith as the quartet were covered by just over half a second.

Nick Bridgeman led the second final from the opening lap until a red flag and was declared the winner, with Rudman second, just inches in front of Anthony.

Both Hyundai Coupe Cup races became duels between Alex Cursley and Alistair Dendy. Cursley was never headed in race one but, in the second Dendy managed to snatch a last-lap win. Similarly, it was Neven Kirkpatrick versus Ian Slark in Super Mighty Minis, resulting in one victory apiece.

PETER SCHERER



Colin Smith leads the Intermarque Silhouette field on his way to victory

HAWKINS

the back of his Tigma, and Thurley took third.

Club racing veteran Rod Birley may have had to start the first Super Saloons race from the back as a result of track-limits infringements in qualifying, but that didn't stop him from winning at a canter. The Ford Escort WRC driver was fourth by the end of the second lap, and just two tours later made the race-winning move by surging past Andrew Mackenzie's BMW E46 M3 on the run to Paddock Bend.

Birley had an easier race-two win to go with his pair of Modified Ford victories, but behind there was action as Tom Bridger's Toyota Starlet and Graham Heard (BMW M3) duked it out for third behind Mackenzie. Heard seemed to settle the tense battle with a determined move at Devil's Elbow at half distance, but a track-limits penalty promoted Bridger back to the position.

JASON NOBLE

WEEKEND WINNERS

CADWELL PARK

JUNIOR SALOONS

Race 1 Harvey Caton

Race 2 Charlie Hand

2CVs

Races 1 & 2 Pete Sparrow

LEGENDS

Races 1 & 4 Miles Rudman (below)

Race 2 Jack Parker

Race 3 Stephen Whitelegg

Race 5 John Mickel

Race 6 Nick Bridgeman

HYUNDAI COUPE CUP

Race 1 Alex Cursley

Race 2 Alistair Dendy

MIGHTY MINIS

Race 1 Neven Kirkpatrick (Super)

Race 2 Ian Slark (Super)

MAX5

Races 1 & 2 Paul Roddison (MX-5 Mk4)



READ

LYDDEN HILL

TIN TOPS

Race 1 Warren Johnson (Peugeot 205 GTI)

Race 2 Dave Hutchins (Honda Civic Type R)

INTERMARQUE SILHOUETTES

Race 1 Colin Smith (Vauxhall Tigra)

Race 2 Ray Harris (Ginetta G40R)

SUPER SALOONS

Races 1 & 2 Rod Birley (Ford Escort WRC, below)

MODIFIED FORD SERIES

Race 1 & 2 Rod Birley (Ford Escort WRC)

CLASSIC CHALLENGE

Race 1 Roy Chamberlain (Triumph TR250)

Race 2 Alan Hersey (Scimitar GTE)



HAWKINS

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com



Heritage Formula Ford provides some classic racing at Donington

DONINGTON PARK
MSVR
24-25 APRIL

Heritage Formula Ford provided some of the closest action as Donington Park hosted an entertaining MotorSport Vision Racing event last weekend.

Ex-McLaren GT racer Josh Smith won the opening race in his Van Diemen from the front row, while behind him a six-car scrap raged, with Alex Walker withstanding all sorts of pressure to take second.

There was more ultra-close racing in the second bout, which culminated in six cars nose-to-gearbox with just two minutes to go. The brave 17-year-old Walker took the win in his Kevin Mills-run Spectrum and retained the Champion of Donington title. "My team have done such a great job with the car," said Walker. "I think we're looking good for the Nationals this year."

The opening round of the EnduroKa Series served up a predictable mix of tight, one-make endurance racing,

with pitlane and track-limit infringement penalties and unexpected plot twists. Star of the show, Le Mans winner Nick Tandy, showed his class in a stint from lap 25 to 65 when he stormed to the front. His team-mate Elliot Mason, however, put their JTR Ford Ka in the gravel, costing them time and penalty laps. Mason drove hard to make up ground, and Tandy blitzed the final hour to recover from 22nd to fifth. When asked about swapping the giddy heights of international sportscar racing for sub-compact hatchbacks, the humble Tandy said: "I love it. It's just great to get out with your mates and drive a race car."

Ultimately, Team Octane Junkies – Barry Ward, Martyn Smith and Adam Smith – drove with consistency and solid pace to take the win by 25 seconds. Considering the five-hour duration, it was a super-competitive race.

The meeting had kicked off with the Focus Cup, with polesitter Scott Parkin leading the first race from start to finish. Gary Mitchell kept the pressure on right until the end, but Parkin was comfortably managing the gap. Race two's reversed grid allowed Spencer Fortag to lead into the first corner from second. But race officials were quick to hand Fortag a 10-second penalty for a jumped start, suggesting that the battle between Simon Rudd and Mitchell was, in fact, for the win. Then Fortag's penalty was rescinded post-race, meaning he took the spoils from Rudd.

The Racing Saloons field had no answer for Stuart Waite in his BMW M3. He led from start to finish in both 15-minute



WEEKEND WINNERS

HERITAGE FORMULA FORD

Race 1 Josh Smith (Van Diemen JL13)

Race 2 Alex Walker (Spectrum 011c)

ENDUROKA

Octane Junkies

(Barry Ward, Martyn Smith and Adam Smith)

FOCUS CUP

Race 1 Scott Parkin

Race 2 Spencer Fortag

RACING SALOONS

Races 1 & 2 Stuart Waite (BMW M3)

ELISE TROPHY

Jason McInulty (Elise S3)

MSV SUPERCUP

Nick Jackson & Ollie Pidgley

(SEAT Supercopa, below)

PRODUCTION GOLFS & BMWs

Race 1 Jackson Goodrum (BMW E30)

Race 2 Jack Watts (BMW E30)

PRODUCTION GTIs

Races 1 & 2 Simon Vercoe (Golf GTI)

Z CARS & NEW GENERATION

PRODUCTION BMWs

Races 1 & 2 Edd Giddings (BMW Z4)



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

heats, winning each race by over 20s. "It's only the second time I've raced the car since a complete rebuild," said Waite. "We're still working on making it better."

Elise Cup polesitter Danny Winstanley retired with mechanical problems on lap five of the 45-minute contest, leaving Jason McInulty and Adriano Medeiros to battle hammer and tongs for the remainder of the race. It was McInulty who took the win by just 0.26s.

The MSV Supercup contest was won by Nick Jackson and Ollie Pidgley in their SEAT, although they were handed the victory by a one-lap penalty for a short pitstop for the impressive Darren Goes in his SEAT Supercopa. When asked about the penalty, Goes said: "I don't understand it really. My clock said we were above the minimum time."

KIERAN RENNIE

Millimetres between Minis as season starts

SNETTERTON
MSVR
24 APRIL

Matt Hammond and Lee Pearce each had a win in the Mini Challenge at Snetterton after some typically close racing.

From the start of the opener, series returnee Hammond led Junior Saloon Car champion Lewis Saunders and Dominic Wheatley but, as the second-place battle grew and grew, Hammond got clear to win by over four seconds.

It was up to five cars battling for second when a red flag ended proceedings. Ricky Page got the verdict, closely followed by Saunders and Wheatley, with reigning champion Harry Nunn closing from fifth.

The second race came down to a wheel-to-wheel finale, with Nunn and Pearce battling it out over the final two laps. Wheatley, Hammond and Page joined in too but, as they rounded Coram for the final time, Nunn got a run on Pearce before finding his path into Murrays blocked. They



held station, with Pearce's winning margin 0.01s, and 0.387s covering the top five.

Matt Bell comfortably won the first of the Radical Challenge sprint races, restarted after Adrian Watt went off at Riches. Jerome de Sadeleer found his way blocked by Michael Clark, and had to recover from a grassy excursion to claim fourth behind Anthony Ayres on the last lap.

De Sadeleer made no mistake in race two, heading Bell from the Wilson Hairpin

on the opening lap, with Clark a distant third. De Sadeleer then got his second win in the enduro, but both he and Bell were initially frustrated by the RXC Spyder of Clark, who eventually retired, handing third to John Macleod.

There were two wins for Will Hunt in the Radical SR1 Cup. James Lay ran him close for a couple of laps in each race, before settling for a brace of seconds.

PETER SCHERER

Summers and Willis share spoils in hillclimb warm-up

PRESCOTT
MIDLAND HILLCLIMB
24-25 APRIL

Alex Summers and Trevor Willis shared the spoils as the opening shots of the 2021 hillclimb season were fired at Prescott over the weekend.

Though not the first round of the British Championship as planned, a stellar line up of big single-seaters gathered for a pre-season warm-up at the Gloucestershire hill ahead of what promises to be a sensational season.

The only notable absentee was 2019



champion Wallace Menzies, one of the main reasons for the event's loss of British Championship status, as he was still locked down in Scotland.

But the rest of the field was full of potential winners. Summers, still searching for a fix to an elusive top-end misfire on his Cosworth Champ Car engine, set a searing pace in the first of the Midland Championship's top 12 run-offs, running within half a second of Sean Gould's 2019 hill record in his DJ Firestorm. Gould, meanwhile, was sidelined with an electrical gremlin.

Willis dug deep in the second run-off with his OMS 28 to edge his rival by a tiny margin. "I slaughtered him," joked Willis of a winning advantage of 0.04s. Summers added: "It would have been nice to win both, but I'm pleased for Trevor."

Others in the mix included Will Hall, who was twice third in his XTEC-engined Force, while Eynon Price (1600cc Force) was twice the best of the smaller-engined cars with two attacking runs.

PAUL LAWRENCE

WEEKEND WINNERS

SNETTERTON
MINI CHALLENGE TROPHY

Race 1 Matt Hammond

Race 2 Lee Pearce

RADICAL CHALLENGE

Race 1 Matt Bell

Races 2 & 3 Jerome de Sadeleer

RADICAL SR1 CUP

Races 1 & 2 Will Hunt (below)

PRESCOTT
MIDLAND HILLCLIMB CHAMPIONSHIP

Final 1 Alex Summers (DJ Firestorm)

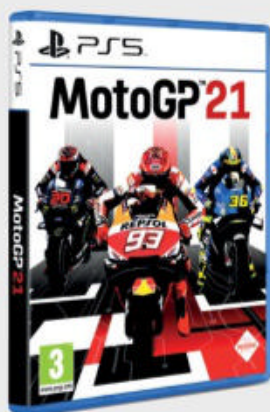
Final 2 Trevor Willis (OMS 28)



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com



BACK TO THE TRACK WITH



VIDEO GAME
MOTOGP 21
RRP £49.99

Following on from the spectacular real-life 2020 season, MotoGP 21, the newly released official game of grand prix motorcycle racing, has a lot to live up to.

Created by Milanese developer Milestone, this is the first game in the series to reach the next-generation machines of PlayStation 5 and Xbox Series. That means 4K resolution, rapid loading times, and smooth 60 frames per second fidelity. You also get natty DualSense feedback on PS5, amplifying the feedback into your palms.

These elements alone do not make a great video game, though. Engrossing gameplay elements, rewarding handling and a sense of accomplishment do.

For most people, the career mode is likely where most time will be spent. You can join an existing squad, but the real enjoyment comes from creating your own rider and team, starting out from the bottom of Moto3 and ultimately winning in the premier class.

You can earn resource credits, which you spend on bike development, by completing tests during free practice sessions and can be stacked to reduce the grind. Later, you can also set up a junior team similar to Valentino Rossi's current scheme.

Interestingly, there are two season calendars to choose from: one that represents what could have been pre-COVID-19 disruption, or one that follows the current 2021 season track roster with two rounds at Losail.

Speaking of tracks, the Circuit de Barcelona-

Catalunya features the remodelled Turn 10, and the Algarve International Circuit makes an appearance for the first time.

When you take to the new venues, MotoGP 21's revised suspension system rides the bumps with far greater accuracy than last season's release, the flipside being that certain circuit replication inaccuracies are now exposed. Your steed often wobbles like a jelly castle.

There are several notable omissions though – although 47 classic riders and three historic tracks are included, there isn't a dedicated mode to use them in. It's the gaming equivalent of owning the Crown Jewels but hiding them in the loft under your old photo albums.

Online gameplay also misses vital elements. There are no scheduled online races, no weekly challenges and no ranking system, which in 2021 just doesn't quite cut it anymore.

Despite these oversights holding the game back from ultimate greatness, there is still plenty of fun to be had.

With MotoGP 20 there was a dramatic gameplay shift into the realms of simulation. The theme continues this year, but now you have additional assists to help ease you into things. Dedication is required before you can channel your inner Marc Marquez, otherwise you will be visiting the gravel traps more often than not.

Throw in tyre compound selection, brake disc size choices and fuel consumption management, and there's a lot to think about during the race even if you manage to stay upright.

Following the inevitable and plentiful crashes, you can enable bike recovery this year. Once your rider has found their bearings, you must walk back to your forlorn ride and push it upright. It adds authenticity, but the novelty wears off rather quickly.

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL
MOTORSPORT

Portuguese GP

Formula 1 World
Championship

Round 3/23

Algarve Circuit, Portugal

2 May

TV Live Sky Sports F1,
Sun 1455**Highlights** Sky Sports
F1, Sun 1900, Channel 4,
Sun 1930

IndyCar Series

Round 3/15

Texas Motor Speedway,
USA

1-2 May

TV Live Sky Sports F1,
Sun 2200

Euroformula Open

Round 1/8

Algarve Circuit, Portugal

1-2 May

Super GT

Round 2/8

Fuji, Japan

4 May

TV Live on
Motorsport.tvWorld Endurance
Championship

Round 1/6

Spa, Belgium

1 May

TV Live on
Motorsport.tv Fri 1710,
Sat 1200Ferrari Challenge
Europe

Round 2/7

Red Bull Ring, Austria

1-2 May

TV Live on
Motorsport.tv Sat 1320,
1435, 2000, 2100, Sun
1320, 1435, 2000, 2100

NASCAR Cup

Round 11/36

Kansas Speedway, USA

2 May

TV Live Premier
Sports 2, Sun 1930

NASCAR Truck Series

Round 7/22

Kansas Speedway, USA

1 May

MotoGP

Round 4/19

Jerez, Spain

2 May

TV Live BT Sport 2,
Sun 1230UK
MOTORSPORT

Brands Hatch MSVR*

1 May

7 Race Series, GT Cup,
Porsche Club

Mallory Park BARC*

1 May

MG Owners Club,
Northern Saloons and
Sports Cars, Northern/
Super FF1600, PickupsDonington Park
MSVR*

1-2 May

Amon Cup, Formula
Junior, Historic Touring
Car Challenge, Jaguar
Classic Challenge,
Pall Mall Cup, Pre-'66
Grand Prix Cars,
Pre-War Sports Cars,
Stirling Moss Trophy,
Woodcote Trophy

Thruxton CSCC*

1-2 May

Classic K, Future
Classics, Magnificent
Sevens, Modern Classics,
New Millennium, Open
Series, Slicks Series,
Special Saloons and
Modsports, Swinging
60s, Tin Tops, Turbo
Tin Tops

Castle Combe CCRC*

3 May

BMW Car Club,
Dave Allan Trophy,
FF1600, GTs, Hot
Hatch Challenge,
Mazda MX-5s, Saloons
*Behind closed doors

A MIXED BAG



The long lap penalty is a welcome addition too, should you abuse track limits or make a false start. The sections can be tricky to navigate, but the option of AI taking control – like an automated pitstop in other racing games – is promised post-release, as are the Red Bull MotoGP Rookies Cup and electric MotoE support categories.

If the game sounds like a mixed bag, that's because it is. There is no doubt that the new console hardware allows the latest edition to step up from a visual perspective. The lengthy career is welcome, and this writer is on board with the polarising braking physics and handling, but the presentation and online modes are from a bygone era.

MotoGP 21 is the zenith of the series so far, but lacks the requisite pizzazz to elevate the experience further.

MotoGP 21 is available on PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox Series, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch and PC.

TOM HARRISON-LORD

SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



FINISHING STRAIGHT



FROM THE ARCHIVE

The Lancia Delta Integrale 16v of Juha Kankkunen weathers the challenging mixed conditions – choking dust when it's dry, cloying mud when it's wet – of the 1991 Safari Rally to take a

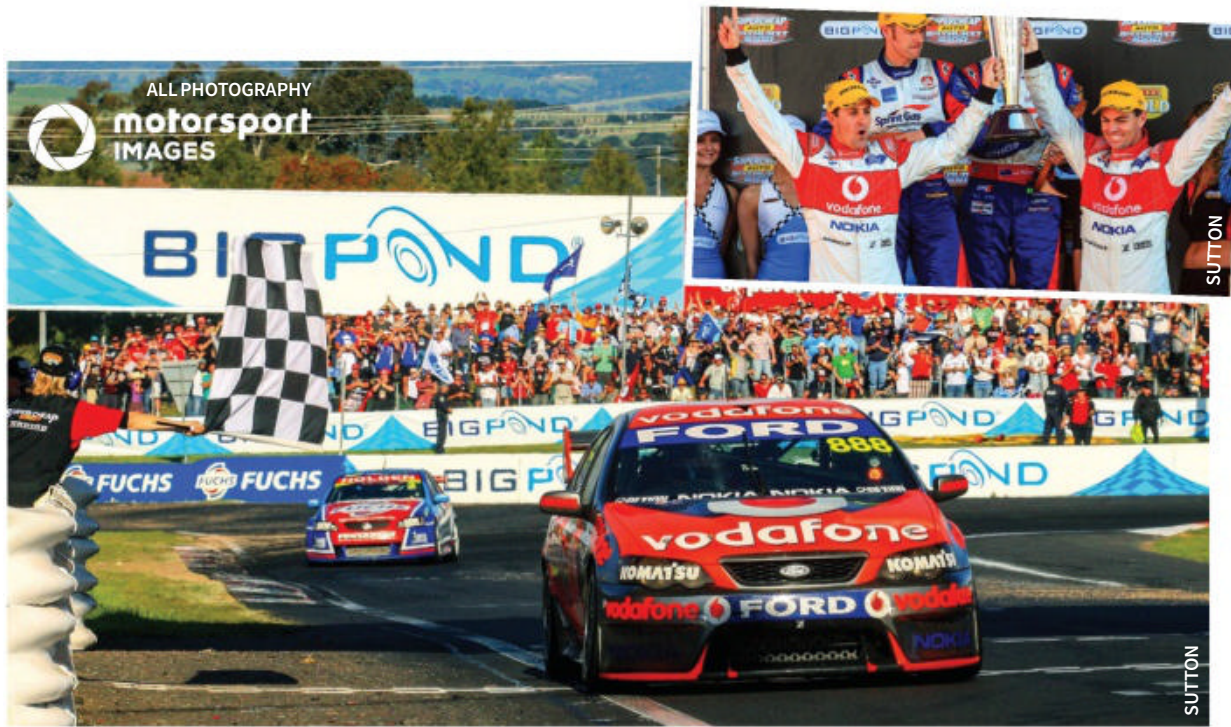
commanding 26-minute victory over Mikael Ericsson's Toyota Celica GT4. Ericsson's team-mate Carlos Sainz had led the initial stages in Kenya, but dropped out with a cracked cylinder block – one of 30 of the

event's 57 starters who failed to make the finish. This was the first of five victories for Kankkunen in 1991, culminating in his third of an eventual four World Rally Championship crowns.



For classic rally DVDs head to
dukevideo.com/wrc





IN DEFENCE OF...

WHINCUP AT BATHURST

This may come as a shock: Jamie Whincup is a four-time Bathurst 1000 winner. Widely considered as the Supercars GOAT with his seven series titles, Whincup is equally renowned as a Bathurst 1000 flop, miserably incapable of Great Race success.

In fairness to the haters, Whincup's recent Bathurst is something to behold in all the wrong ways. His last podium finish at the 1000 was in 2013, and since then there's been a series of spectacular implosions from very strong positions.

In 2014, Whincup ignored orders over the radio to save fuel while leading in the final stint and ran dry a few corners from home, gifting victory to Chaz Mostert and Paul Morris. A year later there was more selective hearing on the radio as Whincup ignored an instruction to pit during a safety car to avoid double stacking, then illegally overtook the safety car. The subsequent penalty ruined his race.

In 2016 Whincup was first across the line at Bathurst but copped a post-race penalty for contact with Scott McLaughlin. There was an engine issue in 2017, his car

lost a wheel in 2018, he finished fourth in 2019, and then crashed out while chasing Brodie Kostecki in 2020.

Those blots in Whincup's Bathurst copybook have taken on a life of their own and now overshadow his achievements. There are three reasons for that. Firstly, it's been nearly a decade since his last win in 2012. Secondly, the disconnect between his record-breaking success in Supercars and his Bathurst record is glaring. And for three of his four 1000 wins it was Craig Lowndes in the car at the finish.

It's fair enough that Whincup's Bathurst record isn't held in the same esteem as those of Peter Brock, Larry Perkins or even Lowndes. But should he really be seen as a Bathurst battler, unable to perform on the biggest stage in Aussie motorsport?

No. Only six drivers have more Great Race crowns to their name than Whincup: Brock, Jim Richards, Lowndes, Perkins, Mark Skaife and Steven Richards. That's pretty impressive company to be keeping for a bloke who's no good at Bathurst.

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

Scores to settle in the Algarve

FULL REPORT FROM THE PORTUGUESE GRAND PRIX



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